

THE PROVIDENTIAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY
AS AN EVANGELISM TOOL IN THE
RURAL CHURCH CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this project was to explore the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool at Grooms Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Reidsville, NC.

Personal reflection and an investigation of the context, revealed common deficiencies around evangelism and the mistrust of technology. The researcher hypothesized proper training in the context would result in members being able to use technology, i.e. social media, to evangelize. A six-week post-modern course was implemented in the context. Pre and post questionnaires, surveys and interviews were used to measure the hypothesis. After the project, members knew how to use technology to share the Gospel.

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Lastly, I want to thank God – for loving me more than I deserve, for choosing me in spite of me and for using me for your glory.

DEDICATION

This work would not have been possible without the undying love of my family and therefore is dedicated to them. To my dad, you inspired this work and believed I could accomplish it. Thanks for your sagacious counsel along the way. To my mom, thank you for being the awesome and supportive mom that you are. Thanks for your administrative support and for being a great secretary to me and all who need your assistance. To my brothers, Leon and Carlton, thanks for your prayers, jokes, and confidence during this process.

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ABBREVIATIONS

3T	Teaching Truth with Technology
GBC	Genesis Baptist Church
GCMBC	Grooms Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
GPP	Gutenberg printing press
KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
UTS	United Theological Seminary

INTRODUCTION

It can be argued one of the most pivotal developments in history was perfecting what has been come to be known as the Gutenberg printing press. The Gutenberg printing press is a climatic moment in history because it introduced the first great media revolution and paved the way for modern era.¹ It is also a turning point in history because it is a point of transcendence for evangelism and technology. Although the development of the printing press was not intended specifically for evangelistic purposes, God providentially used the Gutenberg press to spark a revolution that would bring people to salvation perhaps like never before in history.

If God can do this with the Gutenberg press, certainly God can do that with social media. Over the past twenty years, social media has gained traction amongst nearly every sector of society.² In *The Social Media Gospel*, Meredith Gould defines social media as “web-based tools for interaction that in addition to conversation, allows users to share content such as photos, videos, and links to resources.”³ Social media, like the Gutenberg printing press, was not intended to be used as a vehicle to proselytize, but it has been used increasingly by ministries of different sizes for various purposes.

¹ Frederic Barbier, *Gutenberg's Europe: The Book and the Invention of Western Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 13.

² Edward Garnier, foreward to *The Legal Challenges of Social Media*, edited by David Mangan and Lorna E. Gillies (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), xi.

³ Meredith Gould, *The Social Media Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 3.

The ubiquitous nature of social media, its ease of use and the fact that it is mostly complimentary makes social media a viable ministry tool. However, can it be used to execute practical theology in the local church? Can social media be used as an evangelistic tool in the rural church context? Answering that question is the basis of this dissertation. In order to further examine the subject matter of this document, several critical terms must be defined. Those three terms are providence, technology and evangelism.

What is providence? Providence has been described and defined in a myriad of ways theologically. In *Bible Doctrine* Wayne C. Grudem defines providence as God's continued involvement

With all created things in such a way that he keeps them existing and maintain the properties with which he creates them; cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do and directs them to fulfill his purposes.⁴

This definition underscores the God's cooperation with created things and his ability to guide and direct things as he sees fit. Providence then deals not just with God's ability to create, but also his ability to manage what he has created and use it in accordance to his own will.

Though Grudem's broader definition of providence would suffice, a more succinct definition was utilized for the teaching portion of the project to enhance comprehension within the context. That definition comes from James Montgomery Boice's *The Sovereign God*. In the book, Boice defines providence as "the

⁴ Wayne C. Grudem, *Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 142.

way God works within creation to manage all things according to the immutable counsel of his own will.⁵

Now that providence has been defined as relates to the thesis and project of the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context, I turn my attention to defining another of the key terms that support this work –technology. What is technology? Technology, like providence, has a wide variety of definitions.

The overall framework for defining comes from David Nye’s work *Technology Matters*. In the book, Nye suggests the best definitions of technology include an aspect of evolution.⁶ This means the pace at which humanity and technology advance is inner-connected. As humanity evolves in its thinking and understanding, so will the technologies that humans need to improve life on earth. This provides a solid foundation for the understanding of technology. For the purpose of the project and the class, a less theoretical definition was chosen. For the class and project technology was defined as “the use of science in industry, engineering, etc., to invent useful things or to solve problems.”⁷ This definition of technology supports all forms of technology including social media which is the foundation of this project.

Next, the subject of evangelism will briefly explored. What is evangelism? There are two overriding definitions that were chosen to help shape this project. One of the definitions is found in Alvin Reid’s *Introduction to Evangelism*. Reid defines evangelism

⁵ James M. Boice, *The Sovereign God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 229.

⁶ David E. Nye, *Technology Matters: Questions to Live With* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 4-11.

⁷ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “technology,” accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technology>.

in-part as the “telling of a good message.”⁸ Of course this message relates to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This broad understanding of what evangelism is allows for its usage across different mediums. This definition underscores the fact that it is not just evangelism when you share the message with someone face to face, it can also be evangelism when the message is shared across a digital platform. A second definition to consider on evangelism for the purpose of this thesis is Joseph Aldrich’s definition as rendered in his book *Lifestyle Evangelism*. In the book, Aldrich shares how most effective evangelism is done within the confines of relationship. According to Aldrich, lifestyle evangelism expresses itself best when it “grows out of the context of a healthy, vibrant fellowship.”⁹ This definition was chosen in order to further develop and encourage the sincerity of the individuals who would use the social media platforms to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

The term rural church must also be defined to provide a locus for the ministry project. There are many definitions for the designation rural church. On the surface, the rural church can be considered any church outside of a metropolitan area. In *Rural Children, Rural Church: Mission Opportunities in the Countryside*, Rona Orme provides the general suggestion that rural refers to “any settlement of fewer than 10,000 people.”¹⁰ Orme provides further clarification by noting the difference between “sparse” and “less sparse” rural areas “in recognition that the population density of an area has an impact on

⁸ Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 9.

⁹ Joseph Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1981), 11.

¹⁰ Rona Orme, *Rural Children, Rural Church: Mission Opportunities in the Countryside* (London, UK: Church House Publishing, 2007), 2.

the quality of life for residents.”¹¹ Though the city of Reidsville has more than 10,000 residents, the population density allows for the context of the project to qualify as a rural church.

Additionally, the terms mistrust and distrust must be clarified. The researcher is specific in describing the situation in the context as mistrust of technology and not distrust of technology. According to Cambridge Dictionary, mistrust is defined, in part, as “to have doubts about.”¹² Conversely, distrust refers to “the absence of trust.”¹³ On the surface, the difference may seem small, but the difference is extremely important for the project. Part of the challenge for the project was to show members of the context how they already rely on some forms of technology – which demonstrates their mistrust of certain forms of technology, but not a distrust of all forms of technology. The difference in the lexicon is further borne out in a conversation I had with a member of the context. After sharing with me how much she did not trust technology, I reminded her that her hip replacement surgery qualified as a form of technology. She then understood how her suspicion of technology could be overcome with teaching and training.

The development and testing of the thesis – the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context - has resulted in this six-chapter document. Each chapter examines the subject from a different perspective and concludes with an

¹¹ Orme, 2.

¹² Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “mistrust,” accessed April 13, 2018, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/mistrust>.

¹³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “distrust,” accessed April 13, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/distrust>.

analysis of data collected during the project implementation. Now I will provide a brief preview of the material contained in each of the six chapters of this document.

In chapter one, I begin to outline the “Ministry Focus.” The ministry focus helps to detail an intersection between my personal ministry and the life and history of the Grooms Chapel Missionary Baptist Church converge. The synergy between the two becomes the foundation of the project and thesis. In chapter one, my personal history, the history of the context, and a concise study of the neighborhood and region surrounding the church are discussed to provide the framework for transformational learning.

In chapter two, the thread of the thesis is tracked in the Bible. In chapter two, a specific Old Testament scripture and a New Testament scripture are surveyed to show how the thesis can be proven biblically. Jonah 1 was chosen as an Old Testament example of a place where providence, technology, and evangelism intersect. The New Testament scripture chosen was Acts 8:26-40. These two scriptures are proof that the thesis can be seen in scripture.

Chapter three expounds on the idea that the Gutenberg printing press is representative as a time in history when providence, technology and evangelism converge. Chapter three highlights how the development of the printing press becomes a catalyst for the Protestant Reformation. This intersection becomes one of the most prominent examples of the premise of the thesis in history.

Chapter four evaluates the theological threads prevalent in testing the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context. Because the topic is wide-ranging several theological ideas are briefly expounded upon in chapter four. Some

of the theological threads explored in chapter four are practical theology, Black theology, the theology of evangelism, and the theology of technology.

Theoretical foundations are explored in chapter five. Best practices are developed by researching the thesis in several of the latest offerings on social media and evangelism. Additionally, other fields are surveyed to review social media's use in the disciplines of: politics, medicine, education, and law enforcement.

Finally, chapter six provides analysis for the project developed to test the hypothesis that people in the rural church context can learn to use social media to evangelize. A detailed review of the six-week class and project implementation is given. Pre and post surveys and questionnaires were scrutinized in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The Oxford dictionary defines synergy as “the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined affect greater than the sum of their separate effects.”¹ As I try to synergize the individual ministry gifts that God has given me with the ministerial context in which I serve, the Grooms Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, which will be GCMBC throughout the document, it has become obvious to me several key themes present themselves. First, evangelism is both a deep passion of mine and it is a felt need in the context in which I serve. Second, my initial ministerial training, which shunned the use of technology, and my context’s mistrust of use of technology demonstrate an area of opportunity for development for both me and the context to afford us the chance to execute cutting-edge technological ministry in a rural church context. With this in mind, I am confident that evangelism and technology, i.e. social media can synergize to be a catalyst for positive and transformative learning in my church context. The intent of this paper is to highlight how this ministry focus can create a viable platform for specialized learning and development around the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context.

¹ Oxford Dictionary, s.v. “synergy,” accessed January 11, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/synergy.

Advancing the ministry focus requires the researcher to examine the role evangelism has played throughout my life. Evangelism is the life-blood that flows through the heart of God. The way that the message of God is carried and transmitted from person to person is through the telling and retelling of the Good News of Jesus Christ. At some point, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, each Christian believer makes a decision of faith based upon an evangelistic appeal that has been made to him or her. This appeal begins a new life with Christ. But that new life cannot begin until evangelism has taken place.

Evangelism as a Way of Life

Evangelism at its most basic level is the telling of Good News. Alvin Reid's *Introduction to Evangelism* describes basis of evangelism as telling,

a good message. In the New Testament, the term implies a good message, as in a victory. While some people might attempt to make us feel as though evangelism imposes on the privacy of others, let us never forget we are telling the Good News – Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the grave!²

This telling of the Good News about Jesus has always been a part of my experience. For as long as I can remember I have heard this Good News shared through members of my family. Both my maternal and paternal grandfathers were evangelists and pastors. My paternal grandmother also founded and pastored a small family church. As a child, I remember hearing them communicate the story of God and emphasize the importance of knowing the love of God through Jesus Christ. Even though I did not know it at the time that was evangelism.

² Reid, 9.

Not only do some of my fondest memories of my family involve evangelism, but so do some of my earliest memories of school. On many occasions, during lunchtime in the third grade, I would re-preach the sermon I had heard my childhood pastor preach the previous Sunday. This was strange conversation for the third-grade lunch table, but these were the conversations I regularly engaged in. The small seeds of evangelism had begun to grow in my heart, prompting me to share God's love with others. Obviously, I did not know it at the time, but, even then, I was engaging in evangelism.

Maybe the most impactful evangelism experience of my young life happened when I was about fifteen years-old. This experience, in retrospect, turned out to be a negative one in terms of my spiritual development. One Sunday evening, while shopping with my mother and brothers in a local department store, a man who I did not know came up to my brothers and I and said, "if you die tonight would you go to heaven or hell?" This was a jarring experience for me. Even though the evangelist was attempting to spur me to draw closer to God and Christ, his comment had the opposite effect. I thought since I am going to hell anyway I might as well enjoy the trip.

This experience turned me completely away from trying to develop a relationship with God. At the time, unbeknownst to the department store evangelist, I was wrestling with being called into ministry. I knew there was something I was supposed to be doing, but I did not know exactly what and since I had never been exposed to teenage preachers, it never dawned on me that preaching was it.

The evangelist's comments and this experience provided for me the opportunity to run from the calling I was struggling to understand at the time. This was one of the most significant evangelistic experiences of my life. Had the evangelist taken a different

approach it could have turned me more toward God and accepting His call; instead, his direct and condemning tone turned me away from God at that time.

Though a department store evangelist had turned me away from God as a teen, a conversation spurred by a street evangelist proved to be a catalyst to confirm my calling. It happened during the summer of 1997, while I was participating in an internship at the *Tennessean* newspaper which is published in Nashville, Tennessee. It was a regular day and I and a staff writer at the paper named David Hefner were on our way to the grocery store. Since I was new to the city, David, a devout Muslim, had volunteered to take me under his wing for the summer. David and I often talked about spirituality, religion, Christianity and Islam. This day while walking into the grocery store we were confronted by a street evangelist. This man was literally standing on the corner with a Bible in one hand loudly proclaiming Jesus Christ was soon to come. David turned to me and asked, “What if God wanted you to do something like that?”, in somewhat of an accusatory tone. My response was “if that’s what the Lord has called you to do, you have to do what the Lord has called you to do.” Immediately, I felt the Lord speaking to me saying preaching is what I have called you to do, but, so far, you have run from that calling. Some would look at this encounter as a mere coincidence, but in retrospect God used this incident with an evangelist to not only confirm my calling but, reveal a major aspect of the ministry that I would be called to.

My first real opportunity to work in ministry came through evangelism. While in college, I attended a vibrant college ministry at the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. This was a college ministry that regularly drew hundreds of college-aged students for the Wednesday night Bible study. The college ministry at the

church was supported by several of the colleges in the area including: North Carolina A&T State University, Bennett College, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro College and Guilford College all in Greensboro and Wake Forest University and Winston-Salem State University in Winston-Salem, NC.

I was selected to serve as the Vice President of the Evangelism for the College Ministry. This gave me the opportunity to travel to different campuses and participate in evangelistic outreach. It also afforded me the opportunity to work alongside the Pastor of Evangelism for the Mt. Zion Church and assist him with spear-heading an evangelism conference for the church and community, organizing and developing an evangelistic team for the church and facilitating evangelism classes for lay members who were interested in non-traditional forms of evangelism.

Most stops along my ministerial journey have included some form of working evangelistically. After graduating from college, I founded an evangelism ministry at the Bethel Baptist Church where I was licensed and ordained to preach. This ministry included an evangelism street team, evangelism classes and included offering basic Spanish classes to share Christ with those from the Hispanic community in the area. These experiences provided me with valuable opportunities to organize and implement evangelistic programs across a variety of ministry contexts.

Evangelism in the Context

In 2009, when I was elected to pastor the GCMBC in Reidsville, NC, I found a context struggling with how to evangelize effectively. I came to understand that there was a lack of evangelistic outreach in the church and a general mistrust of technology. Many

members of the church and its leadership relied very heavily on family ties for church growth. The major means of growing the church came through the expectation that those born into the major family groups at the church would eventually become members of the church. For me, the need for church-wide evangelism was urgent and obvious.

Since that time evangelism has become one of the major visionary tenets of our church. The church vision statement reads in part, “Evangelizing the lost to a relationship with Christ.” Our vision statement is periodically reviewed so that our members can be reminded that evangelism should be a high priority. Still, simply listing evangelism as important, without seeking to evangelize is empty as sounding brass and tinkling symbol.

To that end, we have engaged in several evangelistic outreach efforts since my tenure began at GCMBC. One of the first evangelistic efforts that we undertook was that our church hosted World Changer volunteers. These volunteers were missionary groups from different parts of the state who had been dispatched to Rockingham County, NC to participate in service-evangelism. Our church became a sponsor for one of the World Changers groups. World Changers states as part of its mission, “We exist to serve churches in their mission of making disciples by providing mission experiences that develop the heart of students for serving others and sharing the Gospel. This is accomplished through specifically focused, meaningful mission experiences in strategic cities of all sizes. We believe a focused effort of meeting people’s needs and demonstrating God’s love through action leads to fulfilling their deepest spiritual needs.”³ Our church has regularly hosted such groups during my tenure.

³ “World Changers,” Lifeway Christian Resources, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://www.lifeway.com/worldchangers/>.

Another way that GCMBC has increased its evangelistic outreach is through Bible teaching on evangelism. Since my arrival at the church, I have taken time to share in Bible study about the importance of evangelism. We've spent several weeks teaching through the book *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg. This book is aimed at providing lay Christians with a better understanding of their work in evangelism and presenting them with an opportunity to utilize their God-given personalities to evangelize. The book shares, God "wants to use you in a fashion that fits the person He made you to be. God doesn't call us all to spread His truth in the same way. He built diversity into the fabric of His body of believers. And until we realize that, we'll find ourselves needlessly imitating each other's outreach efforts, wastefully duplicating some approaches while harmfully squelching others."⁴

This teaching on evangelism has also become part of our new members' orientation packet at GCMBC. Whenever new members join our church they are taken through several classes. These classes detail their new life in Christ, what it means to be a member, how they can support the church and the history of the GCMBC. We also expose the new members to different methods of sharing the Gospel with their loved ones because new converts seem to be more willing and ready to share the Gospel with others.

Another way in which the GCMBC has become more evangelistic in its outreach is through our annual Summer of Souls event. Each year, our church suspends Bible study in the month of August so that we can do some evangelistic outreach in our community. Each year we start the event off with a cookout in one of the neighborhoods

⁴ Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 122.

in our community. This is a free cookout where all the members of the neighborhood are welcome to attend. During the cookout, I deliver a sermonette and offer Christ.

During the “Summer of Souls” we also sponsor several other events aimed at evangelism. We hold a prayer service, where we pray for those who are lost. Members will bring names of unsaved family members, coworkers or friends to our church and we pray for them. Because we understand that no real evangelism can take place absent prayer, we commit to pray during these times in order that someone may come to Christ.

In 2014, we gave away gas cards as an evangelism tool. The Bible says in James 2:15-17 says, “if a brother or sister is naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”⁵ (KJV) The cards had an invitation to Jesus Christ and an invitation to worship with us at our church. We decided to give out gas cards, because we wanted to do something that would impact people in a very practical way.

I have even committed to making a regular practice of preaching evangelistic sermons. Preaching evangelistic sermons is extremely important because the evangelistic sermon is one aimed and designed at eliciting a response to salvation. In his book, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, Ramesh Richards describes the art of evangelistic preaching.

Evangelistic preaching is preaching. It is not sharing, discussing, or displaying the gospel, but preaching in its technical sense – public proclamation with a view to change values, beliefs, attitudes, or conduct. Next, it is evangelistic. It is not preaching to equip or edify believers but, proclaiming the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in reference to unbelievers’ lack of God’s salvation. Put those

⁵ James 2:15-17. King James Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the KJV.

two statements together and you get a simple and sound definition of evangelistic preaching.⁶

I regularly preach these evangelistic sermons on Sundays where our church will traditionally experience a swell in attendance. This typically will happen on holiday Sundays like Resurrection Sunday, Mother's Day, Christmas or Church Anniversary/Homecoming.

With all of this as a backdrop for the evangelistic efforts at our church, our church has seen some gain. When I came to the church there were seventy-three people on the church role. There are now 187 people on the church role. Our church has grown, but we still struggle to attract a population that a thorough contextual analysis has made know exists in our community at large and specifically in the neighborhood that surrounds the church. We are failing to connect with between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five.

Could it be that one of the main things missing in our evangelistic efforts has been that we have neglected to utilize social media properly? The Bridger generation⁷, as Millennials are also described, is tied by the fingertips to keyboards so that they can search the Web and update their social media platforms. Because this is a key demographic that is missing in GCMBC, what better way to reach them than to use the technology that they so readily use.

⁶ Ramesh Richards, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 73.

⁷ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 162.

A recent Pew Internet Project research poll detailed who is using social media. The survey suggested that 82% of people aged thirty to forty-nine use social networking sites including: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn.⁸

The need to evangelize using technology is something that is covered in Reid's *Introduction to Evangelism*. The author saw, well before the advent social media, the effect that the Internet would have on the culture and in turn evangelism.

We must see technology as our friend in evangelism... the Internet will affect the Bridgers the way television affected Boomers. Throughout history, the church at its best has been at the forefront of technology. Think of how the printing press was used to publish the Bible and how trade routes helped in worldwide missions expansion. In recent history we have lagged behind... we must use media and the arts in Biblical ways to declare Christ to this generation.⁹

This statement is certainly true in the GCMBC context – we must learn to use the technology of social media to declare Christ to this generation. At its most basic this is the evangelism across a different platform – the platform is social media.

Technology as a Way of Life

Upon submitting to the call to preach the Gospel, I began working with and being mentored by a minister from the church I was attending at the time. This opportunity afforded me with a chance to learn directly from someone who was close to me in age and who was already licensed and ordained. I looked at this opportunity as a gift from God. It was the fall of 1997 and I finally submitted to the call I had run from for so many years.

⁸ “Social Networking Fact Sheet,” Pew Research Center, last modified January 26, 2014, accessed December 13, 2015, <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/social-networking-fact-sheet/>.

⁹ Reid, 260.

Though I learned many valuable lessons under his tutelage, I was also taught to have some level of mistrust for technology. Though I was a college student at the time and used to using some level of technology in completing assignments, I was constantly reminded that he had been trained the “old school way” which was devoid of the use of computers and the internet for sermon preparation. Sermon preparation, as I was trained, consisted of a good spiral notebook, a pen, a Bible, and a concordance. Never mind that technology had progressed to the point where much of the work done with those tools, had already been replicated online and was readily available. When MySpace became popular in the mid-2000s, I was told in no uncertain terms not to use it under any circumstance because it was not becoming of a minister of the Gospel.

This instilled in me a level of mistrust toward using technology in the pursuit of ministerial goals. As time passed, even though my professional field was highly technical, I struggled within myself to find acceptable and approved ways to synergize my work life and my ministerial life. My mistrust of technology has continued for several years. Though I greatly admire this minister for his gifting and skill, his training method contributed to a delay in my using technology as a ministerial tool. This mentality has left me at a decided disadvantage when trying to minister to the Millennial generation.

Technology in the Context

When I arrived at GCMBC in 2009, the church had a general mistrust of technology. It was as if the church was being preserved in the same state it was in in 1985. There were very few, ways in which technology was being used to enhance

ministry at the church. The sound ministry used technology to amplify the message, but outside of that ministry, technology was almost nonexistent at the church.

When I arrived at the church, I began to make a case to the leaders about using technology to further ministry at the church. There were only two computers in the entire church. Both were set up for word-processing but, had long since stopped being used. I checked both computers and learned they both ran on Windows '95 operating system – in 2009. When I mentioned this in a church meeting, one of the members remarked, “my home computer uses Windows '95 too.” The fact that no one saw this as a potential problem baffled me.

The church programs were being typed out on a typewriter. In 2009, the church had not advanced to the point where publishing software was being used to design programs. The typewriter that was being used was always carefully covered after each use with a custom-made velvet cover. It was as if those using the type writer knew its delicate nature and understood if it malfunctioned no one knew how to use a computer to design the programs.

The mistrust of technology also extended to the accounting of the church finances. When I arrived at GCMBC in 2009, the finance committee was keeping hand-written accounting records. Checks were written by hand. There was no computerized mechanism for recording or maintaining financial records. When I arrived at the church and began floating the idea of training the financial team to use computer software for this portion of ministry, many members, including deacons, balked at the idea. Eventually, we made upgrades by purchasing new computers and new software. These advancements have helped facilitate the use of technology at the church, but it did result

in members of the Finance Committee resigning because they did not want to be trained to use the new computer software.

The meshing of technology and ministry has also been something that I have tried to do to help make our church relevant to the culture and to use new and exciting ways to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Since being at GCMBC I have tried to incorporate the usage of social media into my ministry.

A few years ago, our church experimented with a smart phone Sunday idea, even though I was not active on social media at the time. This idea was one that I rolled out on Resurrection Sunday. Traditionally that Sunday is in which our attendance drastically increases. On this Sunday, I encouraged all our members and visitors to use their smart phones and tablets during the service to Tweet, Facebook, Instagram and text all the people that they knew the pertinent points from the sermon.

Another way in which we have incorporated social media into our ministry is by utilizing it not just to publicize announcements and happenings at the church, but we also use it in conjunction with our weekly Bible study. Each week I post a question to our Facebook page that connects with the Bible study lesson of that week. This is aimed at taking the message of what we are teaching outside the walls of the church and placing some of the core tenets that we are learning in Bible study on the social media. These are a few of the various ways in which I have incorporated the use of media into the ministry at GCMBC.

A final way the church has pushed forward with its use of technology is through implementing worship screens at the church. This is an undertaking the church completed in 2016. The major push for including worship screens came from older members who

had seen similar screens being used in the same way at different churches. This affords the opportunity for the church to be more unified by being able to read together and collectively get the sermon points at the same time. This technology will allow for more technological improvements in the future at the church.

The mistrust of technology in the context can be attributed to the effect that automation has had on the residents of Reidsville and many members of the context. For decades American Tobacco was the primary employer in the city of Reidsville with approximately 1,000 of the city's 15,000 residents employed at the plant.¹⁰ Reidsville was such an important location to American Tobacco that the company decided to build its flagship plant in the city. Working at the plant afforded residents high-paying jobs that required little more than a high school education. In 1996, the plant closed due to globalization and automation. This plant closure had a tremendous impact on the city and its residents. Members of the church were affected too. Several members of the context, including two deacons, were once employed at the plant. An excerpt of an article written by Helen Lounsbury, a staff writer for *The Greensboro News & Record*, from 1995 explains the challenge facing Reidsville once it lost American Tobacco.

When the plant locks its doors, you might as well wipe Reidsville off the map, says Evelyn Farthing, an American retiree whose husband played the trumpet in the company's Lucky Strike Band. American has been the heart of this city. It allowed me and countless people to own their homes. To support their family. You can't live when your heart stops ... a huge, high-wage employer vacating a small town – make the city's loss more ominous than that of other tobacco towns who have mourned similar losses. Durham, Winston-Salem and Richmond, Va., have lost major cigarette, manufacturers, but those larger cities have adjusted. Access to universities, interstate highways and larger, more diverse labor markets

¹⁰ Helen Lounsbury, "Reidsville Forsaken: American Tobacco Co.," *Greensboro News & Record*, July 1, 1995, accessed March 13, 2017, http://www.greensboro.com/reidsville-forsaken-american-tobacco-co/article_a9feb9c-378f-5e04-acec-5e5e11033de6.html.

helped those cities absorb major factory shut-downs. But Reidsville lacks the economic depth and diversity to weather the storm as resiliently.¹¹

If American Tobacco was not enough, Reidsville has suffered more recent job losses due to other plant closures in the area. In 2017, the Ball Corporation closed its doors. According to a *Rockingham Now* staff report published in December of 2016, the plant was one of the last major employers in the city with about 150 workers. The factory manufactured metal beverage cans in all shapes and sizes. It too was a place where people could work with little more than a high school diploma. Globalization and automation were factors in its closing as well. Additionally, in September 2015, Miller Brewing announced that it would close its Eden, NC facility which neighbors Reidsville to the north. When the plant closed in 2017, 349 workers were misplaced including some members of the context. The company cited moving production to its major brewery in larger Milwaukee as a reason for the decision.¹²

As of this writing, there have been no major announcements by the city to indicate how, if, or when the city intends to try to recruit other major employers to Reidsville. For the residents of the city and members of the context in particular, what they viewed as technology i.e. automation led directly to the loss of their jobs. The difficult and lasting impact that the loss of these employers has had on the city and her residents cannot be overstated.

¹¹ Helen Lounsbury, "Reidsville Forsaken: American Tobacco Co."

¹² Jenna Martin, "MillerCoors' shutdown of Eden brewery begins with 85 layoffs June 3," *Charlotte Business Journal*, April 5, 2016, accessed March 13, 2017, <https://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/news/2016/04/05/millercoors-shutdown-of-eden-brewery-begins-with.html>.

The Power of Social Media

Statistics suggest that these technological tools and many other methods may be necessary in order to reach the current generation. Recent information from Prochurchtools.com indicates just how pervasive social media has become. The website suggests Facebook has over 1 billion users. Fifty-three percent of people on Twitter recommend products in their tweets and 90% of people trust online recommendations from people they know.¹³ The impact and reach of social media is undeniable.

Additionally, the way in which social media has been used proves that social media can be a vehicle to impactful cultural change. This truth was evidenced in the political uprising called the Arab Spring. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says the Arab Spring was “a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011, challenging some of the region’s entrenched authoritarian regimes.”¹⁴ The Arab Spring succeeded in ousting governmental leaders in Tunisia in January 2011. Mass protests then spread to Egypt and eventually caused the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Much of what happened to ignite the Arab Spring took place on social media.

Research by the Project on Information Technology and Political Islam support the key ways in which the technology of social media bolstered the Arab Spring. The Project found that the power of social media “put a human face on political oppression” and allowed the stories of the oppressed to be “told and retold on Facebook, Twitter, and

¹³ Brady Shearer, “The Ultimate Social Media Strategy for Smaller Churches,” Prochurchtools, last modified February 11, 2013, accessed [https://prochurchtools.com/ultimate-social-media-strategy-sm/February 11, 2013](https://prochurchtools.com/ultimate-social-media-strategy-sm/February%2011,2013).

¹⁴ Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, s.v. “Arab Spring, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>.

YouTube in ways that inspired dissidents to organize protests, criticize their governments, and spread ideas about democracy.”¹⁵

The Project found three specific areas in which social media had an impact on the revolutions. First, the use of social media allowed the young, urban and well educated in those countries to share, discuss and debate their political views thereby putting pressure on the government. Secondly, social media has often served as a catalyst for major protests in those countries. Thirdly social media helped to spread the Arab Spring across political borders by allowing oppressed people in other parts of the world to be inspired by what was taking place in Tunisia and Egypt.¹⁶ In these ways, the world was changed through social media.

But it has also had an impact on political movements here in the United States. The ways in which social media is being used to challenge and change the American landscape is highlighted in the ways Black Lives Matters activists are using social media platforms. An article on Wired.com by Bijan Stephen underscores the adaptability of social media in an ever-changing civil rights movement.

If you’re a civil rights activist in 2015 and you need to get some news out, your first move is to choose a platform. If you want to post a video of a protest or a violent arrest, you put it up on Vine, Instagram or Periscope. If you want to avoid trolls or snooping authorities and you need to coordinate some kind of action, you might chat privately with other activists on GroupMe. If you want to rapidly mobilize a bunch of people you know and you don’t want to whole world clued in,

¹⁵ Philip N. Howard et al., “Opening Closed Regimes: What was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring?,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://doi:10.2139/ssrn.2595096>.

¹⁶ Philip N. Howard et al., “Opening Closed Regimes: What was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring?,” 2.

you use SMS or WhatsApp. If you want to mobilize a ton of people you might not know and you do want the whole world to talk about it: Twitter.¹⁷

In this technologically advanced society, social media has been used around the world as a powerful tool in sparking revolution while simultaneously drawing attention to specific issues.

Comparative Demographics: GCMBC vs. The Grooms Road Corridor

It is the population of people who most use social media that our church demographic is most in need of. When compared to the information about the city of Reidsville, the demographics of the GCMBC tell a vastly different story than the city of Reidsville itself. A recent church demographic survey reveals 88% of the church is over the age of forty-five.¹⁸ The congregational make up is 100% African-American.¹⁹ Twenty-four percent of the congregation has a high school diploma while 15% of the congregation graduated from college.²⁰

When comparing the demographics of residents along the Grooms road corridor to that of the actual church members, there are some interesting disparities. There is a glaring age difference between those who live in the area of the church and those who attend the church. City statistics indicate the median resident age in the city of Reidsville

¹⁷ Bijan Stephen, "How Black Lives Matter uses Social Media to Fight the Power," *Wired.com*, 2015, accessed January 5, 2016. <http://www.wired.com/2015/10/how-black-lives-matter-uses-social-media-to-fight-the-power/>.

¹⁸ Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research. *Parish Profile Inventory*. 1998. Kevin Sturdivant.

¹⁹ Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research. *Parish Profile Inventory*. 1998. Kevin Sturdivant.

²⁰ Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research. *Parish Profile Inventory*. 1998. Kevin Sturdivant.

is 39.2.²¹ The congregation is much older than demographics suggest the region is. This statistic is one that suggest that the church may not resonate with the age demographic of those who live in the community surrounding the church.

The church is 100% African-American, while the Grooms corridor is over 70% White.²² This fact suggests that Whites who live along the Grooms corridor do not see the church as a viable option for ministry or membership. This presents an opportunity for evangelism.

With this information in mind, it is apparent that a closer study of the convergence of the areas of evangelism and technology i.e. social media should be further investigated and would form a suitable backdrop for a substantive and interesting ministry project. It is my aim to develop my ministry project around whether using social media as an evangelistic tool can help spur church growth in a rural church environment by properly training members to use social media to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism, Technology and Post-Modernity

This is a topic that fits into the category of post-modern programming as it involves two of the great tenets of post-modernity. One of those tenets is what is described as the weakening of historicity or the loss of a metanarrative. This is the idea that for post-moderns, “there is no outside ideology or textuality; indeed, postmodern

²¹ “Reidsville, NC,” City-data, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Reidsville-North-Carolina.html>.

²² “Reidsville, NC,” City-data.

theory questions any claim to ‘truth’ outside of culture.”²³ That is to suggest that post-moderns do not assume a ideology, theology or belief system just because it was present in the preceding generation. Post-moderns question claims to dominate truth.

The fact that the Millennial generation or post-moderns do not subscribe to a metanarrative suggests that there is a larger number of people to evangelize due to the post-modern questioning of dominant religious truths from previous generations. This all leads to a simple and basic truth that Christians must understand. Evangelism is more relevant than ever in a culture where people are constantly questioning.

A second tenant of post-modernity that this dissertation will explore is the usage of technology in this generation.²⁴ Social media is defined as “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites or social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)” and dates the first known use of social media as 2004.²⁵ This technological usage can create a sub-culture which people feel free to operate in. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. are technological tools that post-moderns use pervasively as noted above.

²³ Dino Felluga, “Modules on Jameson: On Postmodernity. Introductory Guide to Critical Theory,” last modified January 31, 2011, accessed December 13, 2015. Purdue U. <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/postmodernism/modules/jamesonpostmodernity.html>

²⁴ Dino Felluga, “Modules on Jameson: On Postmodernity.” Introductory Guide to Critical Theory.”

²⁵ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “social media,” accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>.

Areas of Inquiry

From this project, there are several lessons that I hope to gain and to share with my church community and other churches of similar demographics and situations. The first piece of information that I would like to gain is how smaller churches currently use social media. My church is part of the Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Association. It is an association of fifty-four churches and has been in existence for over 100 years. The association serves churches in several counties in North Carolina and Virginia. The majority of the churches in Cedar Grove have less than 200 members on roll meaning they are of similar size to GCMBC. A survey of these churches may find that many of them either marginally use social media or do not use social media at all.

Additional areas of inquiry germane to the success of the project is now that the source of the mistrust in the context has been uncovered what can be done to help overcome the reticence of the use of technology in the context. One proposed way to overcome this challenge may be to use the power of collaboration. In the planned six-week course, pairing older participants with younger participants who may be more familiar with the social media apps will help increase comfortability while using the chosen social media platforms which will be used for the project.

Another area of inquiry is to discover how other churches have used social media successfully to evangelize. This is necessary to establish in an independent way how it has been used outside of the context. Independent verification of this fact will eliminate participants in the context as the reason why the project may or may not have worked. If the technology has been used effectively in other contexts, it increases the likelihood that it could be effectively used at GCMBC.

A final area of inquiry for the project is can members of the context be trained to use technology to evangelize. With all the obstacles to the context in terms of evangelism and technology is the project viable? The plan is to use a six-week course to teach participants how to use technology to evangelize. Can members of the context who are unfamiliar with this technology and in some ways educationally challenged, learn to use the platforms for the purpose of sharing the message of Christ.

Methods of Evaluation

There are several ways to measure the effectiveness of social media in churches. One of the methods that will be necessary for this project is the use of surveys and questionnaires. It will be necessary for participants to be surveyed to find out how they currently utilize social media. A survey is a good tool to use because surveys can be completed anonymously. The anonymity involved in a survey helps to foster honesty without any fear of judgment or retribution or embarrassment.

Another way to measure the effectiveness of the usage of social media in churches is to interviews. Interviews provide for longer form answers that may be more specific than surveys. This will also give us the opportunity to compare the data and findings from the church survey and the church interviews to find out the truth of the situation.

Conclusion

The GCMBC is a rural congregation in Reidsville, NC. In the nearly 100-year history of the church, the church has struggled and, in some cases, failed to break out of being much more than a family-centric church. Not family-centric in the sense of being welcoming of all families, but family-centric in the sense of being driven primarily by a few founding families within the history of the church. This issue has become an identifiable problem within the church because the rise and decline of the church has mirrored the involvement of those founding families within the church. This problem has led to a significant decline in the church's ability to evangelize.

Evangelism is one way to properly and aggressively address this issue within the church. If the church is the tool to share the message of God with the world, it is also the tool to draw people to a deeper relationship with God. The GCMBC has engaged in many different interesting and ways of evangelism throughout my tenure at the church. We have even chosen to make evangelism one of the key tenets of the vision for our church. Yet some traditional evangelistic means have not lent themselves to overwhelming success in the rural context.

One of the ways to address this seeming lack of success evangelistically is to incorporate the usage of technology i.e. social media as a way to reach the lost. The usage of social media to evangelize can be effective for several reasons. Social media is being used pervasively among people both saved and unsaved. Secondly, it is a tool that is already established and, in most cases, is free of charge to use.

I believe that a highly specialized and specific social media strategy can and will result in members being more informed on how to use technology to share the Gospel of

Jesus Christ. This will form the basis of an interesting dissertation project. This project will help to be a guide not only to the GCMBC, but also to other small rural churches that are similarly facing the challenge of maintaining relevance in the social media age. With the help of some innovative programming and cutting-edge evangelism, I believe this generation can be positively impacted for Christ and I believe the GCMBC church can be a model of how to do it effectively.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Bible clearly details the creative scope and prowess of Almighty God. Scripture lends credence to the idea that God is not only Creator of the heavens and earth, but that God is also Creator of all things. John 1:3 states, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Though this statement speaks to the pre-eminence of Christ, it also confirms the central role Christ plays in Creation.

Since God is the Creator of society, this means that He is also the initiator of all social sciences. The social sciences seek to understand humans, their relationships with each other, their ways of thinking, and their relationship to the Earth. The social sciences include: anthropology, economics, archaeology, politics and technology. Merriam-Webster defines technology as, “the use of science in industry, engineering, etc., to invent useful things or to solve problems.”¹

In the book, *Technology Matters*, author David Nye relates our understanding of technology to the development of tools. In so doing, Nye argues that technology is more than scientific application – it is an essential part of what it is to be human.

One way to define ‘technology’ is in terms of evolution... The central purpose of technologies has not been to provide necessities, such as food and shelter ... rather technologies have been used for social evolution... Defining technology as

¹ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “technology,” accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technology>.

inseparable from human evolution suggests that tools and machines are far more than objects whose meaning is revealed simply by their purpose.²

Whereas God often chooses to bless His people through the miraculous, God sometimes allows men to solve problems through technology. Technology is a tool at God's disposal to improve and shape the lives of mankind. All things, including the use of technology, are at God's disposal in order to achieve goals or purposes that align with God's will.

Chapter One of this work revealed a need in both the researcher and the context as relates to the use of technology. This deficiency also reveals an area of opportunity for both. Using technology can sharpen the skills of the researcher, as well as help the context do outreach and evangelism in a new and different way.

A major question resulted after an examination of the ministry focus. That question is – was technology used in the Bible as an evangelism tool? If so, where and how? This information is important to the research because if it can be proven that the phenomena occurred in the Bible, it provides an opportunity for technology as an evangelism tool to be taught from a biblical perspective in the context.

A cursory glance suggests there are many places in scripture where the use of technology is integral to the story and its outcome. Some of the most memorable Bible stories include an element of technological advancement. The story of David and Goliath as recorded in 1 Samuel 17, details how David uses a sling, a form of technology, in order to defeat Goliath. In 1 Samuel 6, the Bible details the Philistines who decide to return the ark to the people of God by transporting the ark using a team of cows to pull a

² Nye, *Technology Matters*, 4-11.

new cart and placing the ark on the cart. The use of the cart is an example of technology as compared to the Levites who carried the ark on their shoulders.

The New Testament also gives examples of the usage of technology. Luke's Gospel details an incident in chapter five, at the time of the calling of Simon Peter, that there were fishermen washing their nets, the fishing technology of their time. Another example of a technological advancement in the New Testament, is mentioned in Matthew 25 where Jesus tells a parable which centers around the use of oil lamps. Oil lamps are an improvement on the wooden torches mentioned in the Old Testament.

These are just a few of the instances in scripture where technology is not just a point of information in the story but, is also a point of emphasis to the story. There are specific instances in the biblical text, where God uses technology to facilitate an exact outcome. There are passages of scripture where the providential use of technology is as essential to the transformation of the personalities in the text as the message presented. Scriptural proof of this phenomena will be examined in two specific places in scripture - in the first chapter of the book of Jonah, as an Old Testament example and in Acts 8, as a New Testament example. In these two places in scripture, technology contributes majorly in the outcomes of the stories.

Old Testament Text – Jonah 1:1-16

In the Old Testament book of Jonah, technology aids in the transformation of the people in the text. There are three basic ways to interpret the book of Jonah: literally, allegorically, and as hyperbole. The literal interpretation of the book means that one believes that everything written within the book of Jonah is actual fact. This particular

view is hard for some to accept considering the events recorded in chapter two of the book which record Jonah's experience with the great fish.

Another way to interpret the book of Jonah is to view the book as an allegory, "a story in which the characters and events are symbols that stand for ideas about human life or for a political or historical situation."³ The allegorical interpretation of Jonah reduces the book to a good moralistic metaphor from which people can draw information in order to understand God's message to his people. This interpretation of the book of Jonah does not view the events in the book as historically accurate.

Another way to interpret the book of Jonah is to consider its message a mixture of fact and fiction and thereby regard the message of the book as hyperbole. This view suggests parts of the book, chapter two in particular, have been exaggerated in order to provide a moralistic view of disobeying God. Obviously, your interpretation of the book of Jonah will lend much to how you choose to view the book.

Regardless of one's personal interpretation, there is much history surrounding the book of Jonah. History confirms that there was a popular prophet named Jonah during the time in which the story of Jonah is placed between 800 and 740 BC. Second Kings 14:25 confirms that God has previously used a prophet named Jonah to speak His word to Israel. "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher." This portion of scripture lets us know that Jonah has a previous reputation as a prophet of God before the

³ Merriam-Webster, s.v. "allegory," accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allegory>.

time of the book that bears his name. Not only does Jonah have a reputation as a prophet, but Jonah also probably is popular because of the accuracy of his prophecy. Previously, Jonah has prophesied correctly that the boundaries of Israel would be restored through the efforts of Jeroboam II. His accuracy elevated Jonah's status as one who would have been appreciated and respected for the authoritative prophecies he had previously given.

This scripture reference is an important confirmation that what occurs in the book of Jonah does not happen in a vacuum. Jonah has prior history and renown in Israel which informs our understanding of the enormous risk Jonah takes in following the prophecy God gives him to go to a foreign country. Jonah is called to go and prophesy to Nineveh during the reign of Jeroboam II. This was a time of peace and prosperity for Israel. Two of Israel's major enemies Syria and Assyria were weakened states at the time. The level of tranquility in the land lent itself to spiritual apathy on the part of Israel and the surrounding areas.

At the time of God's call to Jonah, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Nineveh could be considered an historical nemesis to Israel and Judah. The book of Jonah is unique to the Bible because it focuses not on Israel's northern or southern kingdoms, but on a foreign country. This is an interesting twist to the biblical message but it expands the message of God's kingdom to what would have been considered enemies of God. The book of Jonah puts God's amazing grace on display.

This grace was something Jonah was reluctant to share with others, as evidenced by Jonah's initial reaction to God's instruction. No doubt Jonah wondered how he would be received by the people of Nineveh. Jonah had recently prophesied about the expansion of Israel's kingdom, and enjoyed the success related to that fulfilled prophecy. Would

that experience lead Jonah to assume he would not be well-received by the people of Nineveh who were historically Israel's enemy? Perhaps that is one reason Jonah ran.

Perhaps Jonah ran because he felt sharp animosity toward the people of Nineveh whose ill will toward Israel is well-documented in the Bible.⁴ Jonah was from a place called Gath-hepher, because of that, Jonah would have known first-hand about the cruel and blood-thirsty Ninevites. According to commentator Hal Seed, "the city of Gath-hepher was destroyed and thousands of its inhabitants were slain even including Jonah's mother and father all at the hands of the city where God is now calling him to go and minister."⁵ Certainly such a situation would have caused some deep-seated feelings of disdain about the place to which God was now calling him to minister, and animosity toward the people who could possibly benefit from Jonah's ministry. Regardless of his reason for running, Jonah ran.

Now that we have examined the context and cultural implications of the scripture, let us turn our attention to the three essential proofs of the text as related to this paper's stated thesis – that the providential use of technology is as essential to the eventual transformation of the characters in the text as the message delivered. The focus of this biblical analysis is not the missiological message that Jonah delivered while in Nineveh, but the message that Jonah delivered in Jonah 1:1-16 while trying to escape the will of God and flee his Nineveh assignment on the way to Tarshish.

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. ³ But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he

⁴ Priscilla Shirer, *Jonah: Navigating a Life Interrupted* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2010), 15.

⁵ Hal Seed, *Jonah: Responding to God in All the Right Ways* (Dayton, OH: New Song Press, 2008), 31-32.

paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. ⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. ⁷ And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. ⁸ Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? ⁹ And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. ¹⁰ Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. ¹² And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. ¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. ¹⁵ So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

God's Providence

First, let us examine the ways in which God's providence intersects with this passage of scripture. The call of God is undeniably providential. According to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* the word providence means "to foresee."⁶ However, when that word is used in reference to God it takes on a different and more complex meaning. According to the *Encyclopedia*,

while all rational beings exercise a providence proportioned to their powers, yet it is only when the word is used with reference to the Divine Being who is

⁶ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "providence," accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/providence-1.html>.

possessed of infinite knowledge and power that it takes on its real and true significance. The doctrine of divine providence, therefore, has reference to that preservation care and government which God exercises over all things that He has created in order they may accomplish the ends for which they were created.⁷

God calls Jonah with His own purpose and destiny in mind for him. Here, the providence of God can be seen in the fact that God's call of Jonah works to accomplish the end that God has in mind and not necessarily what Jonah has in mind. That call is for Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and to "cry against it." What exactly does God mean when He instructs Jonah to cry against Nineveh? The idea is translated from the Hebrew word *qara*.⁸ The word *qara* is used to have an onomatopoeic emphasis on the hearer in that it was supposed to sound like the action conveyed by the sound. This translation depends on the versions of the Bible. The New International Version (NIV) translates it as "preach against." The English Standard Version (ESV) translates it as "call out against it." The New Living Translation (NLT) translates it as "announce my judgment." These translations all indicate that the call of God for Jonah involved some form of proclamation. However, to be true to the original Hebraic expression is also to include a melancholy emotive adjoined to Jonah's message. God is instructing Jonah is to preach and pity, cry loudly and lament, and to share the message and shed tears.

This is but the first instance of providence that can be identified in the text. Another providential perspective of the incident in Jonah 1, occurs in verse 3. "Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go

⁷ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. "providence," accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/providence-1.html>.

⁸ "H7121 - qara' - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)," Blue Letter Bible, accessed 15 April, 2016, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7451&t=KJV>.

with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” Unimpressed and unmoved by the Divine call God gives him in verse one, Jonah decides to get away to Tarshish and providentially finds a ship headed to Tarshish. Tarshish was just about as far from Nineveh as one could get. Tarshish was about 2,000 miles from where Jonah was in Joppa at the time.⁹ This location was as far from the assignment God had given him as imaginable at the time of the text. Jonah’s decision to board this ship satisfies his intention to get away from what God has called him to do. But God providentially arranged the particular ship Jonah would board. Even though Jonah paid the fare to make the trip all the way to Tarshish, God had it in mind that Jonah would not get to the place where he intended to go but, would eventually end up where God had instructed him to go.

Not only is Jonah on the “right wrong” ship, God providentially arranged it that a storm would interrupt Jonah’s journey. According to Jonah 1:4, “But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.” The text is clear; God is the author of the storm that Jonah and his shipmates encounter. This was not a convergence of situation and circumstances; God sent this wind to the sea. In Hebrew, the idea expressed by the chosen terms suggests God threw or hurled the storm Jonah’s way. The storm is God’s doing.

Once the storm hits, it is so ferocious that the text indicates that those on the boat thought that the storm would break the ship apart. Each mariner prayed to his own god. Their prayers are also the result of a providential move from the hand of God who so orchestrated the situation, that many of the mariners on board the ship had different

⁹ Shirer, 36.

religious backgrounds. They called on their gods and God so arranged the situation, that Jonah the reluctant runaway prophet, ran from God right into an opportunity to minister to men who do not have a relationship with the God of Israel. Israelites often relied on Phoenicians, who had several harbors along the Mediterranean Sea, in order to help navigate the seas and rivers.¹⁰ Perhaps the sailors aboard the ship were Phoenicians which would explain why they did not know Jehovah God as Jonah did. They call on their gods, not Jehovah God, giving Jonah and God the opportunity to introduce them to Jehovah that they would not have had otherwise.

Providence also plays a hand in verse seven of the text. Once the sailors awaken a slumbering Jonah, they cast lots to find who caused this evil to befall them. Notice, the sailors do not count the storm to be part of their regular seafaring experience. The special nature of this storm causes the sailors to try and find the specific cause for it; so, they cast lots, a common practice of the time used to discern the will of God. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* describes casting lots this way:

An object used in casting or drawing lots, which consisted of bits, or small tablets, of wood or stone; these were sometimes inscribed with the names of persons, and were put into a receptacle or a garment, from which they were cast, after being shaken together; he whose 'lot' first fell out was the one chosen.¹¹

If this is the method used in the casting of lots on the ship, God providentially arranged that Jonah's lot would fall out first, thereby, implicating Jonah as the culprit responsible for the misfortune that had befallen the ship and its mates.

¹⁰ Ralph Gower, *The Manners & Customs of Bible Times* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2005), 202.

¹¹ Vine's Expository Dictionary, s.v., "casting lots," accessed April 15, 2016, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?topic=VT0001708>.

Not only is the providential hand of God demonstrated in many different ways in the encounter detailed in Jonah chapter, but providence also plays an important role in the technology highlighted in that chapter, most notably the merchant ship that Jonah decides to board in order to flee to Tarshish.

The Role of Technology

Why did Jonah choose to board a ship in the first place? Jonah could have chosen to walk in the direction of Tarshish. Obviously, a journey of that magnitude would have been an arduous task. Jonah could have chosen to hide much in the same way Elijah decided to run and hide in 1 Kings 19. This would have been a way for Jonah to avoid the call of God without using technology. However, Jonah decided to flee using a ship because the technology of the ship presented the fastest opportunity for Jonah to flee. Using the ship to get away enabled Jonah to go the furthest distance the fastest.

The ship that Jonah boarded in order to flee God's call to Nineveh is a technological marvel of its time. It was most likely a "Phoenician hippo,"¹² a popular ship of the time that had several variations based on cargo and usage. Phoenician hippos were in heavy use at the time of the text. The Phoenicians were master seafarers due to the proximity of seaways to their homeland and their dominance in ancient trade. The mere fact that technology had advanced to the point where a ship could travel the more than 2,000 miles to go from where Jonah boarded the ship in Joppa to the expected destination of Tarshish shows just how far technology would have had to come at the time of the text

¹² Chris Oxlade, "Phoenician hippo," *The Great Illustrated Encyclopedia*, accessed June 8, 2016, <https://www.q-files.com/technology/ships-and-boats/history-of-sailing-ships/>.

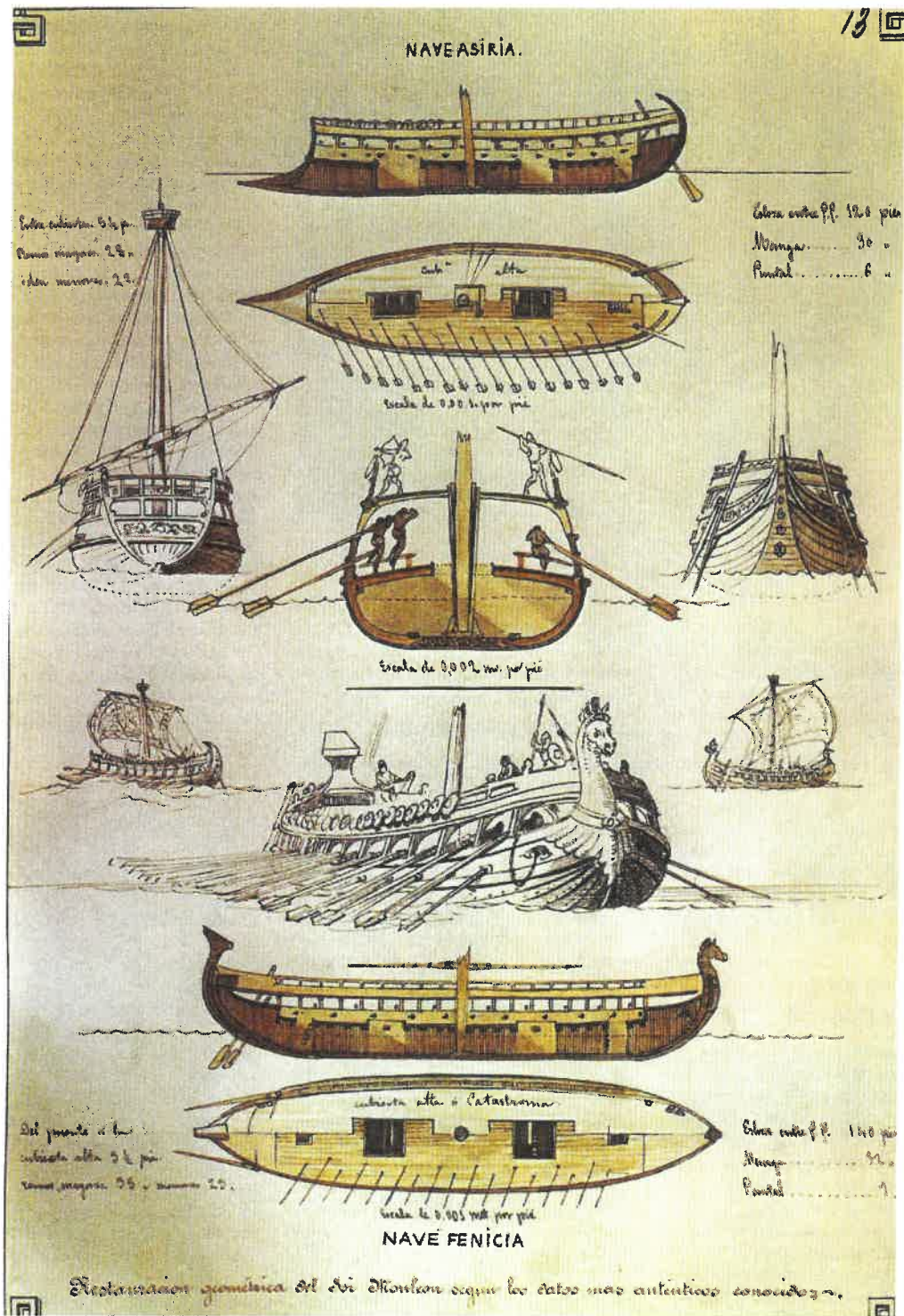


Figure 1. Diagram of a Phoenician Hippo Ship

The above diagram shows several ways boating technology had advanced by the time of Jonah. The ship Jonah likely traveled on used a rectangle-shaped sail. This is a technological advancement in comparison to the ark described in Genesis 6. A second

noticeable difference between the diagram and the description of the ark is the use of oars. The diagram shows a three-tiered structure where cargo could be placed on the lowest level, oarsmen rowed on the second-level, and sailors were stationed on the top level.

Verse four is the next place where we see technology playing a role in the durability of the ship. The verse reads, in part, “that the ship was like to be broken.” The ship endured a tremendous amount of jostling and jolting from the winds and waves, but the winds and waves did not break the ship apart. The ship was built in such a way that it was able to stand up against the storm. This too gives rise to our understanding of the development of technology throughout the Bible. The Noahic account describes the construction of the ark in these terms “make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.” This indicates that the ark was held together by pitch. *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary* defines pitch as “a thick, black, lustrous and sticky substance obtained by boiling down tar ... used in calking the seams of ships.”¹³

By the time of the text, technology as relates to ship building had advanced well past pitch. The ship in the Jonah account was most likely constructed using the pocket method.

These ships were laboriously and painstakingly built by carving each piece of wood in the hull to create a row of ‘pockets’ along the edge. On the piece of wood beside it, a similar row of pockets was carved, with each one being lined up exactly opposite a pocket in the neighboring hoard. A small piece of wood was then put in each pocket of one of the boards, which ended up looking like it had a long row of wooden teeth. Then the second board was placed beside it and its own pockets fit perfectly onto the teeth of the other.... When all the pegs were in

¹³ Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary, s.v. “pitch,” accessed June 8, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/concordance/p/pitch.htm>.

place, the two boards could not be separated by any amount of force by wave or cargo.¹⁴

The ship was constructed in such a way that it was able to stand up against the storm. The engineering of the ship was also extremely advanced for its time. The boat in the Jonah text was not a war ship, it was a cargo ship. As noted above, cargo ships came complete with rows of galley oars.¹⁵ The Phoenician hippo could accommodate a crew of over 100 people and were built to transport loads of 200 to 450 tons.¹⁶

Technology & Evangelism

The role of technology is unmistakable in the text. However, the evangelistic thrust of Jonah chapter one is the subsequent transformation of the sailors that takes place after the storm, after the casting of lots, after Jonah's confession of his intention to run away from God's call and after the sailors throw Jonah into the sea. These sailors would have never experienced Jehovah in this way had not been for the providential use of technology. Jonah 1:14-16 reads,

¹⁴ Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. ¹⁵ So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

It is apparent that the experience of the storm on the ship had a tremendous impact on the ship's crew. The crew makes some very dramatic decisions in the wake of

¹⁴ "Ancient Ships and Sea Trade," Phoenicians, last modified 2015, accessed June 8, 2016, http://www.phoenician.org/ancient_ships.htm.

¹⁵ Chris Oxlade, "Phoenician hippo," *The Great Illustrated Encyclopedia*.

¹⁶ "Ancient Ships and Sea Trade," Phoenicians.

the Jonah experience. According to verse fourteen, these men cry “unto the Lord.”

Essentially these men pray to Jonah’s God. It was customary for sailors to pray to various gods during crisis in hopes of being able to quell any difficulties during the trip. This fact is evidenced earlier in the text in verse 5, where the Bible reads the “mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god.” The events surrounding the storm and Jonah helped the sailors see the power of Jonah’s God and it suggests that the sailors are open to understanding more about this God.

The proof of transformation can be seen, not just in their willingness to pray, but also in the actions taken by the men in verse sixteen. These seamen take various steps in order to demonstrate their newfound understanding of Jonah’s God. First, they “feared the Lord exceedingly.” The text suggests these men revere the Lord. One of the definitions of this word in Hebrew is to “reverence him, as the avenger of wrong; hence to be godly, upright.”¹⁷ This suggests more than just casual encounter with Jonah’s God, it suggests that these men want to be considered as righteous in the eyes of this God.

Not only did the men fear the Lord, but they offered a sacrifice unto the Lord. The text does not specify what the sacrifice is, but it does denote that it took place. There is some discussion about when the sacrifice happens. Some Bible scholars think that the sacrifice happened once the men found themselves safely on shore. Still others suggest that the sacrifice was immediate and that the men used material that they still had on board after lightening the ship in order to sacrifice to God.¹⁸ Regardless of when the

¹⁷ Bible Letter Bible, "H3372 - yare' - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)," accessed April 16, 2016, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3372&t=KJV>.

¹⁸ “Jonah 1:16,” Biblehub, last modified 2015, accessed April 16, 2016 <http://biblehub.com/jonah/1-16.htm>.

sacrifice happened, it would have taken time, energy and effort in order to complete. This indicates that these men were able to engage God on a different level. Through this instance we see the men understood the complexities of how to approach God. They did not just approach God through prayer, but prayer in conjunction with sacrifice.

Then finally these sailors made vows to the God. The vows that the sailors were to make could have been linked to the sacrifices given. As the *IVP Bible Background Commentary* explains vows in the Old Testament, “typically concerned sacrifice. For instance, the sailors may have vowed to offer a memorial sacrifice of some sort to Yahweh each year on the anniversary of this event. The vows acknowledged that the sailors had experienced an act of divine power.”¹⁹ There is some debate as to whether or not the sailors come to complete faith in God. Yet, the complex level of the steps that the sailors go through suggest more than a casual event in their lives. It points to how these sailors have been transformed due to the events on the boat.

Does anything in the text happen without the technology of the boat? The answer is a resounding and emphatic no. The storm does not happen if Jonah and the sailors are not using the technology of the boat. Verse four of the text reads, “But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea.” God uses the sea to locate the storm. The sea is an essential aspect of the storm. But what makes that aspect of the storm so frightful is that a shipping vessel is trying to navigate the waves at the time that God sends the storm.

¹⁹ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 778.

Jonah cannot be thrown overboard if they are not using the technology of the boat. The logic of the text dictates in order to calm the storm, the sailors must rid themselves of whomever or whatever has raised the ire of the gods. “The sailors had concluded that the storm was a judgment against one of their number who had done something horrible.”²⁰ This would not have happened had Jonah chosen to flee by walking. The technology of the ship makes it feasible for them to throw Jonah overboard. Without the ship, these men would probably have had no frame of reference to think to take such action.

The sailors would not have responded the way that they did if they were not using the technology of the boat. Again, it was customary for sailors to call on their gods when they found themselves in abnormally fierce conditions on the sea. Though this may have been ritualistic it led to a softening of the sailors’ hearts so they could experience transformation. When Jonah is thrown overboard, the cessation of the storm proves to the sailors that Jonah’s God was the one true God. There was obviously something different about this encounter that led to a greater revelation of who Jehovah was to these men. But if they are not on the boat, the storm never comes. And if the storm never comes, they never have the opportunity to pray to their gods and subsequently know Jehovah God in a different and new way.

The event on the sea would not have had as lasting an effect if they were not using the technology of the boat. The great deliverance that the sailors experience happened while using the technology of the boat. At the time of the text, seafaring was an extremely dangerous trade. Perhaps these sailors had known of the dangerous trade they

²⁰ James M. Boice, *The Minor Prophets Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2002), 274.

were engaging in by losing family, friends and loved ones who had been engaged in the same trade. This was not an occurrence that these men would have easily forgotten. Their deliverance from such a fierce and pounding storm sparked within them a desire to annually observe their narrow escape by promising vows unto the Lord. There is no need to commemorate their great deliverance if they never get on the boat in the first place. The boat is as necessary to transformation of the sailors as the storm is. Without the use of technology, this situation would have undoubtedly turned out differently.

God has the ability to use all things that He has at his disposal to accomplish His will in any situation. In the first chapter of Jonah, the narrative clearly shows that God providentially uses the technology of the boat and the storm in order to bring the sailors to a better understanding of Him. Jonah, the reluctant prophet who ran from delivering the message of God to the Ninevites, became an ocular example that caused God to intervene in Jonah's escape plan and set off a chain-reaction that ended in the souls of the fishermen being forever altered.

The New Testament Text: Acts 8: 26-40

This Old Testament narrative is not the only place where the convergence of providence and technology reap a harvest. Because of the story of God's grace and desire that all should come to the knowledge of God and a relationship with Him, God chose to bring about a similar scenario in the New Testament era. This occurrence takes place in New Testament scripture in the eighth chapter of the book of Acts. This incident is the interaction between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

The book of Acts records the beginnings of the church and its operation and inception as believers learn to live without the visible presence of Christ and come to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. There is some debate surrounding the date of when Acts was written. Carson and Moo suggest that the most reasonable date for the writing of Acts is “the mid-60s.”²¹ Some theologians suggest the events recorded in Acts 8 happened around AD 30.²² Acts 8:26-40 reads,

²⁶ And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. ²⁷ And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, ²⁸ Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. ³⁰ And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? ³¹ And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. ³² The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: ³³ In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. ³⁴ And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. ³⁶ And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷ And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. ³⁹ And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

²¹ D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 298.

²² D.A. Carson et al., 307.

The setting of this incident is described in the first few verses of the encounter. This Ethiopian eunuch is traveling home after spending time in Jerusalem worshipping. There is much debate about the eunuch's religious affiliation. Some suggest that this eunuch was a proselyte Gentile convert to Judaism. Others identify the eunuch as a God-fearer or maybe even a Gentile who has chosen to serve a monotheistic God.²³ Even though we do not know the specifics that went into his decision to make the trip, Luke, the author of Acts, gives us a basic summation that the eunuch has come to Jerusalem to worship. When the eunuch meets Philip, the eunuch is making the return trip back home.

The timing of this return trip sheds light on just how difficult a trip this would have been. A close examination of the text puts the time of travel and the encounter between the eunuch and Philip around noon. This would have been an extremely difficult hour to travel considering the immense and intense heat travelers would face. Many people chose to travel at night to avoid the heat.

This raises the question what kind of person would travel at this time of day under these conditions just to worship? The answer is simple – a person with the means to do so. The Ethiopian eunuch was a person of considerable wealth. The text describes him as someone with “great authority under Candace queen of Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure.” It is undeniable that the person who has charge of the queen's funds would be compensated handsomely so as not to be tempted to steal from the national treasury.

²³ “Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch,” BibleGateway, last modified 2015, accessed April 16, 2016, <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Acts/Philip-Ethiopian-Eunuch>.

The Ethiopian eunuch would have also been somewhat of a novelty in Jerusalem simply for the dark hue of his skin.

He is at once exotic, powerful and pious. Greeks and Romans were particularly fascinated with dark-skinned Africans. Although *Ethiopian* was used generally for anyone with these physical characteristics, here it refers to an inhabitant of the ancient kingdom of Meroe, which covered what is now northern Sudan south of Aswan to Khartoum.²⁴

This eunuch was unique in several ways, but what makes him unique to Bible history is this encounter. The same way that God providentially used the incident with the Jonah to bring the sailors to a relational knowledge of Jehovah God and the same way that technology played an integral role in that encounter is the same way that God providentially manipulates the situation involving the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip to bring about a desired evangelistic result with technology again playing an integral role.

God's Providence

There are several ways in which Divine providence plays a role in this biblical incident. In the very first verse of this passage, one can see providence play a role. Philip receives a message from “the angel of the Lord.” *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* describes the angel of the Lord as a “supernatural being who bears a message on behalf of God. In many passages in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord is identified with God.”²⁵ This is a definite marker of providence in the text. This being is dispatched from God, with a message for Philip about God's Divine will. In this moment, God is orchestrating the eventual encounter that Philip will have with the Ethiopian.

²⁴ “Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch,” BibleGateway.

²⁵ “The Angel of the Lord,” *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, last modified 2014, accessed April, 24, 2016, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/angel-of-the-lord/>.

“Luke wants us to know that the meeting between Philip and the eunuch was a direct consequence of the Holy Spirit’s intervention. In the eunuch story, the Holy Spirit led Philip into the desert to meet the eunuch.”²⁶

It is also providential that this Ethiopian is reading from Isaiah at the time that Philip is passing by and providentially Philip is within earshot of the Ethiopian. Verses thirty-two and thirty-three of the text gives us the place in Isaiah where the eunuch was reading.

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.

This portion of scripture refers specifically to Christ. For the eunuch to be reading these verses right when Philip passed, an evangelist who could very easily expound on what the eunuch had read, was a sheer stroke of providential mastery. Being an evangelist, Philip could easily expound on what the eunuch had read. In that moment, the eunuch’s need was met.

The overriding providence in the narrative can be seen even in the eunuch’s inability to understand what he is reading. The eunuch was probably not an unlearned individual because of his standing in the court of Candace. This point is further proved by the eunuch’s ability to read in the first place. Yet the eunuch asks for Philip’s interpretation of this narrative. The eunuch asks this question regarding who is speaking in the text. The question is one that Jews in the first century would have had as well. The

²⁶ Zorodzai Dube, “The Ethiopian eunuch in transit: A migrant theoretical perspective” (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2013), accessed April 24, 2016, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S0259-94222013000100112&script=sci_arttext.

“someone else” in the text could have been interpreted two ways – one referring to the righteous sufferer and the other interpretation refers to the wicked Gentile nations who would suffer at the hands of the victorious Messiah.²⁷ In this exchange the eunuch providentially asks a question that directly points to Christ and the salvation Christ offers.

It can also be considered providential that this man is from Ethiopia. As stated earlier, Ethiopia was quite a distance from where the eunuch finds himself in this encounter with Philip. For Jews, Ethiopia represented the end of the earth. At the time of the text, what happens in Acts 8 can be seen as a fulfillment of Acts 1:8. Acts 1:8 is seen as a simple declaration of the scope of where the Gospel would eventually be shared. The verse reads, “but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” For Jews, Ethiopia represented the end of the earth. Here the *IVP New Testament Commentary Series Acts* offering states, “God actively fulfilling his purposes for the scope of the church’s mission. If it reaches Ethiopia so soon after its beginning, Theophilus can know for sure that the gospel that is to be preached among all the nation is true.”²⁸

Verse twenty-nine demonstrates another aspect of providential directive: “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” This scripture indicates that it is under the unction of the Spirit that Philip moves to get close to the chariot. If there were a plethora of chariots traveling in the same direction at the same time, the Spirit is being distinctive and specific in telling Philip exactly which chariot to

²⁷ “Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch,” BibleGateway.

²⁸ “Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch,” BibleGateway.

get close to. This was not just an unrelated occurrence. This incident shows just how much God is in control of all of the variables that are taking place in the text.

It is also providential that as they continue with the conversation they come to water where the eunuch could be baptized. The men are both traveling “toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” It is undeniable in the biblical record that these men are traveling along a desert road where water would have been scarce to come by. Yet, as they travel, Philip and the eunuch come across the perfect place for the culmination of the salvific act to take place. They find water and this water is sufficient for a proper baptism in the eyes of Philip the evangelist. There is some debate as to whether or not this baptism was immersion or not, but it was administered by someone who was recognized in the church and would therefore be considered legitimate. “The eunuch is baptized as Philip stands with him in the water. Is it by immersion or pouring? The account will accommodate both understandings. The act’s theological significance is cleansing for sin and incorporation into the fellowship of those who have experienced Christ’s salvation blessings.”²⁹

God’s providential intervention in this encounter can be seen in numerous ways: in how Philip’s itinerary was being changed by the angel of the Lord; the proximity of Philip and the Ethiopian’s passing; in the eunuch’s failure to understand the portion of scripture he was reading; in the selection of scripture read; and in the of the Ethiopian’s nation of origin. The many ways in which providence plays a role in this pericope is summed up in William H. Willimon’s *Acts Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*.

²⁹ Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch,” BibleGateway.

The presence of the gospel out here in the desert of Gaza with this Ethiopian of somewhat murky physical, religious, and ethnic status can only be attributed to the constant prodding of the Spirit. If the good news is being preached out there, it is the work of God, not of people.³⁰

The Role of Technology

Not only is providence important in the text, but so is technology. Technology plays an integral role in the outcome of the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion. So much so that without the technology mentioned in the text, the eunuch's conversion would not have taken place.

The first piece of technology mentioned in this text is the scroll that the eunuch reads from. In this age of fast advancing technology where tablets, smart phones and processors get smaller and smaller, the use of ancient technology, such as this scroll, may seem as far from what we consider technology as east is from west. However, a review of our definition of technology may be in order. Technology "is the use of science in industry, engineering, etc., to invent useful things or to solve problems."³¹ The scroll definitely represents the invention of a useful thing.

Admittedly the word "scroll" does not appear in the text but scholars almost unanimously agree that a scroll is being read from. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* describes the form that ancient scrolls, sometimes called rolls, would take. "A book in ancient times consisted of a single long strip of paper or parchment, which was usually kept rolled upon a stick, and was unrolled when a person wished to read it. The roll was usually written on

³⁰ William Willimon, *Acts Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: Knox Press, 1973), 72.

³¹ Merriam-Webster, s.v. "technology," accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technology>.

one side only The writing was arranged in columns.”³² This is most likely what the eunuch was reading as he rode in the chariot. Brittany E. Wilson’s work, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts*, speaks of the eunuch and the scroll this way, “The eunuch is reading from a copy of the scroll of Isaiah, an item that would have been expensive to commission and produce in the ancient world. In sum, the eunuch is in charge of a vast treasure, reading from an expensive scroll.”³³

The idea of scrolls had been developed over millennia. The earliest forms of writing were done as pictographs that were inscribed on large clay tablets, on columns or in the crypt of kings.³⁴ This development is evident in Bible history. In Exodus 3, the bible says the Lord gave Moses “two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” (NIV) By the time of the NT, and the initiation of the ministry of Christ in Luke 4, writing technology had progressed to the communal use of scrolls. Jesus read from such a scroll to announce the inauguration of His ministry in the temple in Nazareth. Eventually, the scroll became synonymous with the power and move of God.

The scroll became a metaphor for what the scroll contained – and perhaps in an extended sense also for the mystery of the relation between the physical text in which God’s words were contained and the spiritual sense of what those words were taken to mean. The laws given to Moses were written on stone tables.... At other times God writes in wax. But most of all, God discloses Himself in a scroll,

³² Smith’s Bible Dictionary, s.v. “scroll,” modified 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?topic=ET0003151,NT0004187,BT0003609>.

³³ Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 133.

³⁴ Henri-Jean Martin, *The History and Power of Writing* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 10.

the dominant written technology of the ancient world. God bears witness to His purposes in a scroll.³⁵

The scroll that God speaks from in the text with the Ethiopian eunuch represents technology at its highest social, cultural and spiritual form.



Figure 2. Picture of Dead Sea Scroll

The scroll is not the only use of technology evident in the Acts 8 text that is necessary for the eventual conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The other form of technology that plays a prominent role in the evangelization of the eunuch is the chariot that the eunuch rides in. The Greek word for chariot in verse 28 is *harma* which is typical of war chariots that are armed with scythes and drawn by many horses.³⁶

³⁵ Brian Cummings, "The Book as Symbol," *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, (2010): accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606536.001.0001/acref-9780198606536-e-0007?rskey=Z5d9Vf&result=1> <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606536.001>.

³⁶ "G716 - harma - Strong's Greek Lexicon (KJV)." *Blue Letter Bible*, accessed April 25, 2016. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G716&t=KJV>.

Chariots originated around 3000 BC.³⁷ The earliest chariots were slow and driven by oxen. When oxen were switched out for horses, chariots began to rise exponentially in popularity and began to be used as weapons of war in part because chariot speeds increased from about two miles per hour to about ten miles per hour.³⁸

But this particular chariot was not a war chariot. This chariot was one that fit the comfort and convenience of the eunuch. And this chariot was lavish for its occupants.

The eunuch is in charge of the queen's entire treasury and he travels by means of a chariot a detail that Luke mentions three times. The eunuch is thus associated with a vast amount of wealth and a means of transportation typically reserved for people with wealth. The eunuch's chariot also appears to be quite spacious since it holds at least three people. Philip and the eunuch are both able to sit in the chariot, and Luke indicates that it holds a driver as well since the eunuch commands the chariot to stop in v. 38. In sum, the eunuch is ... traveling with a driver (and perhaps other unnamed attendants) by means of a spacious chariot.³⁹

The eunuch is no doubt riding in style. The fact that the eunuch and Philip ride unencumbered gave Philip the opportunity to explain the message of the Gospel. The text describes how Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way." The uninterrupted ride allowed for Philip to share the intricacies of the faith with this new convert. This is something that would have been difficult, if not impossible, to do while walking along a desert road in the heat of the day. The ride in the chariot provided the evangelist and Ethiopian with an opportunity to achieve a level of understanding necessary for the eunuch to convert.

³⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "chariot," modified November 11, 2015, accessed April, 25, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/technology/chariot>.

³⁸ John N. Wilford, "Remaking the Wheel: Evolution of the Chariot," *The New York Times*, February 22, 1994, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/22/science/remaking-the-wheel-evolution-of-the-chariot.html?pagewanted=all>.

³⁹ Wilson, 133.

Technology and Evangelism

Additionally, the technology of the chariot and the scroll combined to present the optimum outcome as expressed by the eunuch in verse thirty-six “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, see here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” It is Philip’s proper exegesis of the text, supported by the use of the scroll and the ability to travel in the chariot that led to them being near water while the importance of baptism is explained to the eunuch. It is with urgency that the eunuch desires to be baptized and the chariot serves as a conduit to allow this to happen in a timely manner after the Gospel has been explained.

With the baptism, the conversion of this foreign-born eunuch is complete. Interestingly, verse thirty-seven of the text is omitted in some ancient renderings of this pericope. It is suggested that it was later added to satisfy the idea that a complete conversion resulting in a confession of faith by the eunuch has taken place.⁴⁰ The fact that this verse may have been added later underscores the importance of the evangelistic thrust that takes place in this encounter. Not only do we see God’s Providence on display in this text and the important role that technology plays in helping the eunuch reach a decision, we also see how this text is evangelistic in nature. From Philip’s first inquiry of whether or not the Ethiopian understood what he read, Philip’s intent was to share the Gospel. Philip’s question was an open-ended question designed at eliciting a response that may give him a further impetus to explain the Gospel. This opened door resulted in a changed life.

⁴⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2007), 348.

Further evidence of the breadth of evangelism in this text is Luke's choice of the word "preached" in verse 35. The word choice is not explain or taught, but preached. The word in the Greek is *euaggelizo*. In the New Testament this word is "used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation."⁴¹ And it is because of what Philip preached that this eunuch makes the decision to come to Christ. That is evangelism at its core – the presentation of the Gospel message aimed at allowing the hearer to make a decision resulting in faith in Christ.

The result of the Ethiopian's encounter with Philip is faith in Christ. But it could have led potentially to more evangelism. "According to tradition, he became bishop of the first Christian Church in Ethiopia. He also preached the gospel in Arabia where he suffered martyrdom. After the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, Christianity grew in Africa."⁴²

Conclusion

God has the power to use whatever He has at His disposal to accomplish His Divine will. The accomplishment of God's will is done in various ways throughout the Bible. Isaiah 55:8 confirms this truth as it reads, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." God has a grand track record of being able to use even the things that seem most innocuous to bring out His plan.

⁴¹ "G2097 - euaggelizō - Strong's Greek Lexicon (KJV)," Blue Letter Bible, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G2097&t=KJV>.

⁴² H. C. Felder, *The African American Guide to the Bible* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2015), 221.

Part of the grand scheme of God is that everyone come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is the basic understanding of what evangelism is. Though evangelism in its most earnest form is a NT construction, it can be seen in a missiological sense in places in the OT.

Because God is not limited in the way in which he moves to bring all to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, He is able to providentially use technology in order to bring it to pass. Providence speaks to God's unquestioned ability to be sovereign and intervene in the ordinary events of man. Technology can be considered anything that has been invented to solve useful problems.

There are places in scripture where God providentially uses technology as a tool to bring someone into a relationship with God. The OT example of this is in the book of Jonah. In the first chapter of the book of Jonah several situations rise to the level of providential intervention. God's hand can be seen as providentially directing the storm; in the casting of lots; and in the response that the sailors have to the storm and the situation surrounding the storm.

The use of technology can be seen in the text through the vessel that Jonah chooses in his attempt to run away from God. The merchant ship Jonah boards to escape God's call, represents the development of technology from a shipping perspective. The technology of the ship can be seen in several ways including the ship's durability and design.

This passage also rises to a transformational thrust based on the end development that the sailors aboard the ship make vows to God after being on the ship that they did not have before being on the ship. The experience with Jonah left the sailors with more than

just a good story to tell. They now had vows to keep as a constant memorial of their deliverance on the sea.

Not only does God providentially use technology as an evangelistic tool in the OT, but this sentiment is echoed in the NT. The Acts 8 encounter involving Philip the evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch serves as a prime example of the God intermingling His providence and technology to bring about a desired result.

God providentially arranges the entire encounter which results in the eunuch making a faith decision. It was by God's direct providence that Philip chooses the route that He chooses. It is by God's direct providence that Philip is instructed to go near the chariot. It is by God's direct providence that the eunuch is reading a passage of scripture that lends itself to an evangelistic thrust.

There are also technological aspects that are essential to the positive outcome of the text in Acts 8. First there is the scroll. The scroll is the basic object that allows Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch to begin a conversation in the first place. If there is no scroll, the Ethiopian eunuch is not reading a passage of scripture for Philip to explain. Consequently, there would have been no natural opportunity for the two to strike up a conversation. Then there is the chariot. The chariot plays an integral role in the salvific experience of the eunuch as the conversion act is completed due to the transportation which brings them to an acceptable place for baptism to be performed. This baptism is an essential part of the Christian conversion experience for believers in the first century Church.

The episode culminates in the Ethiopian eunuch expressing faith in Christ. This expression is the purpose of all evangelistic efforts and it is clearly demonstrated in the

text. So much so, that oral tradition suggests the eunuch takes Christianity back to Ethiopia and begins to do evangelism there. All of this to the glory of God because God causes all things to work together for His good proving biblically that God has providentially used technology as an evangelism tool.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The fact that God providentially uses technology as an evangelism tool can unequivocally be seen in scripture. Jonah's unproductive attempt to flee from God's assignment in chapter one of his prophecy by boarding a ship headed for Tarshish instead of Nineveh resulted in the providential use of technology exposing the sailors to Jonah's God. Likewise, the Ethiopian eunuch's use of several forms of technology, i.e. the chariot and the scroll, provide the necessary ingredients for Philip to expound on salvation and for the eunuch to come to faith in Christ culminating in the eunuch's baptism. Both examples support the idea of God's providential use of technology as an evangelism tool. But what examples of this thesis can be proven outside of Holy Writ?

There are several junctures throughout history where technology has been providentially used as a tool to help spread the message and the cause of Christ. This fact can be traced across centuries in order to show God's hand orchestrating the development and usage of technology at critical times and in pivotal ways to spread Christianity abroad. This can be seen as far back as before the common era in the development, maintenance and construction of Roman Roads. These particular roads were invaluable in the spread of the Christian message throughout the Roman Empire and abroad. During the Middle Ages, technology played an important part in the dissemination of the cause of Christ during the Crusades. There is evidence that Christian soldiers at the battle of

Acre used siege weapons, which were a new technological advance at that time, in order to fight against Muslim forces.

The nexus created when these technological advances were used in the furtherance of Christianity, pale in comparison to perhaps the most important evidence of the use of technology as an evangelism tool. The development of the Gutenberg printing press (GPP) is arguably the most significant invention in Christian history and it could be argued that this invention propelled humanity into modernity. The GPP was important to the spread of evangelism for at least two reasons: first, the printing press ushered in an era where the Bible was more accessible to the common man; and second, the printing press was an indispensable tool for the production of both indulgences and propaganda that would eventually result in the Protestant Reformation which came on the heels of the invention of the GPP.

The Technology of Roads

History proves that these technological advancements were not only timely in their implementation, but also invaluable in the spread of the cause of Christ and the Gospel message. To examine the progression of the use of technology and its effect on spreading the Gospel we will first examine the development of the Roman roads system. These roads became the routes the Gospels and the epistles traveled as the message of Christ was spread abroad.

Roads have existed in some form or another for more than 4,000 years.¹ Roads have always been used for trade and travel. The thing that made the Roman Road system different from other roads that existed before is that the Romans developed two technological advancements that drastically improved roads. Those two advancements were: developing a drainage system so that the roads could be passable despite the weather conditions and perfecting a method to pave the roads using stones, gravel and other material.²

The first road in the system was “Via Appia” or the Appian Way and was built around 334 BC.³ By the time the Romans were finished, they had laid more than 50,000 miles of road which allowed travelers to journey as many as seventy-five miles in one day. By the time the Christian era dawned these roads were well established and well used. After the death of Christ, the epistles featured in the New Testament were transported along these same roads.

¹ Josh Lauer, “Roman Roads: Building, Linking, and Defending the Empire,” *Science and Its Times: Vol. 1*, Ed. Neil Schlager, (Detroit: Gale, 2001), accessed June 13, 2016, <http://joannedawson.cmswiki.wikispaces.net/file/view/Roman+Roads.pdf>.

² Lauer, 3.

³ Lauer, 2.



Figure 3. Section of the Appian Way, ancient Roman road

Of course, the same roads that led from Rome also led to Rome, and information was carried in both directions. In most cases, this simply facilitated receiving news and taxes from distant parts of the empire. However, Christianity spread along these roads, too, traveling easily to Rome and throughout the empire. There is, of course, no way to know how far, or how fast Christianity would have spread in the absence of these roads, but there can be little doubt that much of the new religion's early success was owed to the speed with which its adherents could spread their message through the empire.⁴

Without these roads, the spread of Christianity would have definitely been slowed. The development of this technology perfectly coincided with the life and Christ and the subsequent rise of Christianity. This technology removed impediments to the dispersion of the Gospel message.

Siege Weapons as Technology

Not only was the technology of passable roads a tremendous boon to the spreading of the Gospel, but other Roman technological perfections also had far reaching

⁴ Lauer, 2.

implications on the spread of the cause of Christ. Though siege weapons have been used for centuries, historians suggest it was the Romans who perfected the use of siege weapons.⁵ Those weapons were used by Christian fighters in the cause against the spread of Islam.

Siege weapons include the usage of the following: scaling ladders, battering rams, siege towers and various catapults.⁶ Scaling ladders were used to be able to climb high fortress walls in an attack. Battering rams were used in order to pummel the doors or gates of a castle to allow military forces to rush in. The siege tower was more elaborate than the scaling ladder in that the tower was constructed in order to provide protective cover to the soldiers who were attacking the walls of a castle, town or fortress.⁷ Catapults were used in order to hurl various objects over high fortress walls into enemy territory.

⁵ Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege*, (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998), 1.

⁶ "Medieval Warfare," Medieval Warfare, last modified February 24, 2015, accessed June 14, 2016, <http://www.medievalwarfare.info/index.htm#towers>.

⁷ "Siege Tower," Medieval Life and Times, accessed June 14, 2016, <http://www.medieval-life-and-times.info/medieval-weapons/siege-tower.htm>.



Figure 4. Portait of siege weapons being used in battle depicting siege ladder, battering ram and catapult

These siege weapons were very much in use during the Middle Ages and the Crusades. History proves they were also used in the Battle of Acre in September 0f 1189. As the battle waged on for the walled Muslim city of Acre, the Christian Franks who were trying to attack the city began to receive reinforcements of siege weapons by sea.

What the Muslims were unable to halt, however, was the seemingly continuous flow of fresh Europeans and equipment coming by sea. The heavily laden ships also bore timber for the construction of heavy siege engines. More alarming to Saladin than Christian siege weapons was the news that Frederick Barbarossa, king of Germany and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, had reached Constantinople.⁸

⁸ Kenneth P. Czech, "Third Crusade: Siege of Acre," Historynet, last modified, June 6, 2006, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://www.historynet.com/third-crusade-siege-of-acre.htm>.

As seen above, in figure 4, siege weapons were very much in use during the Third Crusade. Christians warriors employed siege engines and siege weapons to further the cause of Christ against Muslim forces. The siege weapons shown in figure 4, and many other forms of siege weapons were used to wage war during Medieval times.

The Printing Press as Technology

Technology has often been used throughout history to further the cause of Christ and the Gospel message. We have examined the Roman Road system and the use of siege weapons during the Crusades. Still these do not represent the pinnacle of the merging between method and message when it comes to technology in Christian history. Perhaps nowhere was this phenomenon more prevalent than during the development of the Gutenberg printing press and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Much like the Roman Road system and siege weapons were developed in different cultures over time, the development of the printing press took several centuries to perfect. Johannes Gutenberg is credited with the invention of the European movable printing press; however, Gutenberg's invention would not have been possible without several incremental, yet important, developments along the way.

One of the first major contributors to the technology of Gutenberg's printing press in 1450 was the development of paper. Long before the printing press could mass-produce books for print, there had to be a medium upon which to print the material. The first existence of what we would describe as paper dates to the 105 A.D. China.⁹ Chinese

⁹ John Man, *The Gutenberg Revolution: The Story of a Genius and an Invention that changed the World* (London, UK: Headline Book Publishing, 2002), 104.

tradition suggests, “the imperial counsellor Ts’ai Lun, who in the words of a fifth-century official history, ‘conceived of making paper from the bark of trees, hemp waste, old rags and fish nets.’ Near his home, it was said, was a pool, where he learned to mash his materials into a slurry with a mortar setting it to dry on his fish-net webbing.”¹⁰

Eventually, Europeans would improve on this design by adding glue to the process which would stiffen the paper and allow for ink to be applied to both sides of the pieces of paper. Obviously, without paper there would not have been a printing press.

Paper was a major contributor to the development of the printing press, but it was not the only major factor. Around the fifth century, historians suggest printing using carved wooden stamps was invented. The idea of printing using single block wooden stamps grew out of printing using much more rigid material like bronze and stone.¹¹

By 971 A.D., wood block printing was so popular and prevalent that the Chinese monk Zhang Tuxin began a project to print more than one-thousand copies of a collection of Buddhist scriptures. The project took twelve years to finish.¹² But as arduous as that task was to complete, it was yet another small step in the march toward the eventual printing press.

The Chinese inventor Bi Sheng took another step toward the moveable type printing press around 1041 A.D.¹³ Bi Sheng is said to have been a common man who was an expert at the wood-type printing that was available at the time. His printing press was

¹⁰ Man, 104.

¹¹ Asian Art, “The Invention of woodblock printing in the Tang and Song Dynasties,” Asian Art, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/invention-woodblock-printing-tang-618%E2%80%9393906-and-song-960%E2%80%931279>.

¹² Asian Art, “The Invention of woodblock printing in the Tang and Song Dynasties.”

¹³ Asian Art, “The Invention of woodblock printing in the Tang and Song Dynasties.”

the moveable type, but it still used wood as the primary material for the printing press. This multi-step approach led to reducing the printing time from several days to a matter of hours.¹⁴

The question can be raised, if moveable type printing was available several centuries before Johannes Gutenberg perfected the technology, why was the invention not popularized until Gutenberg in the 1450s? The answer is that the printing press idea needed to be streamlined to include a language that can be somewhat abridged. The press also needed the right material, metal, which would be durable enough to maintain the speed and repetitive pounding of the process. The Chinese language is made up of several thousand symbols which would have been difficult and time consuming to create and to set up before printing could take place. Gutenberg's press needed a language that lends itself to simplicity in order to make the process of printing more efficient.

This is an idea John Man explains quite well in his book, *The Gutenberg Revolution*.

The genius of the alphabet – not just our Roman alphabet, but any alphabet, the underlying principle – is that it uses a few symbols, typically between twenty-five and forty, to represent the whole range of linguistic sounds (and non-sounds, like the silent gathering of energy before the little explosion that begins the letter p). It is not a one-to-one match between sound and symbol, as is sometimes claimed. Its astonishing power comes from its vagueness, its fuzziness, its flexibility, its ability to record anything spoke simply by rearranging the same few symbols.... This combination of fuzziness and simplicity gives it a massive advantage over other writing systems that predated it or evolved in parallel with it, notably Mesopotamian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese symbols.¹⁵

¹⁴ Asian Art, "The Invention of woodblock printing in the Tang and Song Dynasties.

¹⁵ Man, 108 - 109.

Not only was the paper important to the invention of the moveable printing press, but so too was the development of wooden-block printing, the process of moveable type printing that came around 1041 A.D., and the decision to use a language ‘simple and fuzzy’ enough to be able to easily manipulate the press.

Gutenberg Perfects the Printing Press

When the fullness of time had come Johannes Gutenberg was born into these pre-existing conditions. Pinpointing a date for Gutenberg’s birth can be difficult. Gutenberg family records have not been able to give an exact date of his birth. Because of this, scholars have chosen to focus on the ten-year span between 1394 and 1404.¹⁶ Officials in Gutenberg’s birth city Mainz, Germany would eventually have a hand in one of the most recognized dates. In the 1890s, they decided to celebrate Gutenberg’s birth on June 24, 1400 as they were celebrating a summer festival.¹⁷ Many have recognized that date as Gutenberg’s official birthdate since that time.

Gutenberg grew up in tough economic times. The city of Mainz, Germany, his hometown, was, like many other cities of the time, recovering from the difficult epidemic of the bubonic plague which had ravaged resources. Because of the severe economic hardship, Mainz city officials decided to levy exorbitant taxes on its citizens. This was something that the Gutenberg family wrestled with during Johannes upbringing as his family was not only one of the founding members of the town, but his father was also

¹⁶ Dianna Childress, *Johannes Gutenberg and the Printing Press*, (Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2008), 14.

¹⁷ Childress, 14.

considered to be part of the aristocracy of Mainz.¹⁸ This led to the family's many moves during Johannes' childhood.

Historians believe Gutenberg's father, Friele Gensfleisch, worked at the ecclesiastic mint in Mainz.¹⁹ Metal is a key component to the print that Gutenberg would one day develop. Its durability and strength allowed the printing characters to withstand the force of the press without sustaining much damage to each individual letter.

Gutenberg's early exposure to metal through learning from his father in the Mainz mint gave him enough experience working with metal to be able to create and manipulate the metal matrices for his moveable printing press. As a young man, Gutenberg attended the University of Erfurt which would have given him the firm grasp on Latin which would be essential for the printing press.²⁰

By the time Gutenberg unveils his printing press in 1450, he has gone through many personal ups-and-downs. He spent time in both Strasburg and Mainz, eventually returning to Mainz around 1440. Initially Gutenberg developed his new take on the printing press in secret. That turned when he ran out of money and had to ask for capital from an investor named Johann Fust. Fust gave Gutenberg a substantial amount in loan - enough for Gutenberg to continue his work on the press.²¹ Fust and Gutenberg agreed that the loan would use the materials necessary for the printing press as collateral.

¹⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Johannes Gutenberg" accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Gutenberg>.

¹⁹ Katie Miller, "Inventor in History: Johannes Gutenberg," Intellectual Ventures Laboratory, last modified December 12, 2012, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.intellectualventureslab.com/invent/inventor-in-history-johannes-gutenberg>.

²⁰ Miller, "Inventor in History: Johannes Gutenberg," Intellectual Ventures Laboratory.

²¹ Miller, "Inventor in History: Johannes Gutenberg," Intellectual Ventures Laboratory.



Figure 5. Photograph of a replica of Gutenberg's printing press

After securing a second loan with Fust and as time passed, Fust became impatient with the pace at which Gutenberg worked on the printing press. Fust sued Gutenberg essentially gaining all of Gutenberg's materials and machinery. The fact that the lawsuit was public record is what revealed the truth of what Gutenberg had been working on to the public. With word out in the street of Gutenberg's printing press, he was forced to quickly produce the machine using this moveable printing press.

Gutenberg was an inventive genius, but he did not possess the entrepreneurial skill to crown his immeasurably important creation with commercial success; that

was accomplished by Johann Fust, who converted Gutenberg's invention into a business enterprise that could exist on the revenue it brought in. Fust, having financed the development of the process of printing from cast type by lending Gutenberg huge sums of money...brought a successful suit for foreclosure, thereby acquiring Gutenberg's shop, equipment, tools, inventory, and supplies. He successfully transformed the moribund printshop into the first major publishing business.²²

After the suit, Gutenberg continued work in his print shop. Initially the work that he did helped to recoup Fust of his investment. Some historians suggest this was a major contributor to how and why Gutenberg decided upon producing the Forty-two-line Bible in 1455 which would solidify Gutenberg's place in history.



Figure 6. Gutenberg Forty-two line Bible

The Forty-two line Bible was not the first book printed using Gutenberg's European version of the moveable type printing press. This Bible was a three-volume text printed in Forty-two line columns. It had no title page, and no page numbers. On the surface, it looked much like the work of copyists at the time. Though the Bible may have

²² Frederick G. Kilgour, *The Evolution of the Book* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8.

seemed plain to look at, it was a technical marvel. “Experts are generally agreed that the Bible, though uneconomic in its use of space, displays a technical efficiency not substantially improved upon before the 19th century.”²³

As revolutionary as the Forty-two line Bible was on the printing press, it was not an obvious printing choice as it may appear to the 21st century reader. Now Bibles are ubiquitous, but in 1450s it was not so obvious that the Bible would be a good choice to print. The printing of the Bible would lead to a definite break from the norm because it was a controversial undertaking on many levels – socially, economically and religiously.

Man explains,

For the Church and most clergy, the Bible needed careful handling. The fount of Christian doctrine, it could also be the source of error... It needed experts to explain it. Theologians and clerics were the nuclear physicists of their day, guardians of a powerhouse that meant salvation when applied correctly, eternal destruction if misused. Their authority, not to say income, depended on maintaining their guardian role. Only a few individuals, like Nicholas of Cusa, liked the idea of making the Bible widely available.²⁴

As Man explained, the idea to put the Bible into regular peoples’ hands was not a widely-accepted notion at first. But the printing of Gutenberg’s Forty-two line Bible served to break up the long-held monopoly on God’s word. Though for economic means, it was some time before the Bible could be in the hands of ordinary people, the decision to print the Bible was a giant step forward in giving more people access to the Bible.

This move took the Bible out of the hands of a select few and led to the masses being able to have access to the Bible. This is a direct way in which technology led to evangelism. It would take some years after the printing of the Forty-two line Bible before

²³ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “Gutenberg Bible” accessed June 29, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gutenberg-Bible>.

²⁴ Man, 143-144.

the evangelistic push could rightly be seen, but the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in 1455 was a definite beginning to this movement. “The Scriptures became accessible to all strata of German society ... and the presses rolled them out. And in so doing, the Church of Rome lost its authority/control over the totality of Christianity as Protestants engaged in reform on spiritual, political and social levels.”²⁵

In short, without the technology of the printing press, fewer people would have been given access to the Word of God. God often uses the technology to spread His message. Though this may have not been the initial purpose of the development of the European moveable type printing press, the call and cause of Christ was furthered as a result.

The Printing Press and the Protestant Reformation

The printing of the Bible is not the only major way that the technology of the printing press aided in the spread of evangelism. The printing press greatly aided in the development and spread of the Protestant Reformation. The moveable type printing press was perfected just in time for the Protestant Reformation and the major players in the Reformation all utilized the technology of the printing press to disseminate their message to the masses.

By the time Martin Luther tacked his Ninety-five theses on to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany on October 31st, 1517, the Church had already found a myriad of ways to use the technology of the printing press. One of the uses of the

²⁵ Carlton F. Harvey, “Technology and the Church through the Centuries” (paper presented at the 25th Annual Conference Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, Kansas City, MO, March 17, 2006), accessed June 14, 2016, <http://nazarene.org/files/docs/TechnologyChurchThroughCenturies.pdf>.

printing press was in printing indulgences. Gutenberg, in fact, printed indulgences for the Church as early as 1454 while simultaneously working to finish the printing of the Forty-two line Bible.²⁶

The Church had long used indulgences. Before Gutenberg's press was in development, indulgences had become more popular due to the rising belief in Purgatory.²⁷ These indulgences were a way for the Roman Catholic Church to grant, for a price, "full or partial remission of the punishment of sin."²⁸ With the ability to print these indulgences in a more efficient manner, some in the Church saw these indulgences as a way for the Church to raise money for the construction of the New St. Peter's Basilica.

Tradition suggests that Luther nailed his Ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg church on that day because of his growing contempt for indulgences and his growing concern for the parishioners who were in his care. Whatever his motivation, Luther's words sparked a revolution among the people. It caused the faithful to take a more focused look at the practices of the Church to determine message and motivation.

Luther did not shy away from the usage of the technology of the printing press. Instead, Luther embraced it. Though his original Ninety-five theses were handwritten, Luther soon understood the value and speed of the printing press. "If it had not been for the efficiency of movable type printing for duplicating the document, his reforming work

²⁶ Peter Kelley, "Documents that Changed the World: Gutenberg indulgence, 1454," UW Today, modified November 16, 2012, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.washington.edu/news/2012/11/16/documents-that-changed-the-world-gutenberg-indulgence-1454/>.

²⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Indulgence" accessed June 29, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/indulgence>.

²⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Indulgence."

and influence on other reformers would have developed differently.”²⁹ Man suggests that Luther was so prolific in his writing that nearly one-third of all German publications printed between 1518 and 1525 were attributed to Luther.³⁰

The Church did not sit idly by and watch as Luther took quickly to the printing press to make his case to the public. The Church also found ways to use the printing press to respond to the increasing critique coming from Luther and others. The Church took time to respond to Luther’s commentary with its own propaganda. But as soon as the Church could respond, because of the speed of the technology, Luther would raise another point of critique.

Both the Church and its major dissenter were using the same technology to argue theological issues in a way that affords the public the opportunity to receive both critique and response in a timely fashion. This in turned heightened the level of debate and thinking surrounding theological matters. The use of technology also aided in the spread of the ideas of the Reformation outside of a central location. Perry Brown, author of “Preaching from the Print Shop,” described Luther this way, “Martin Luther spoke to Europe from two pulpits – one in the church, and one in the print shop.”³¹

Luther published his dissenting arguments in the form of cheaply printed booklets that were easily carried and flooded the cities of Europe, spreading the idea of reform. Without the output of the printing press, it is likely that the Reformation would have remained a local quarrel. But by using the new technology Luther and

²⁹ Barry Waugh, “The Importance of the Printing Press for the Protestant Reformation, Part 2,” Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, modified October 2013, accessed June 29, 2016, <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/the-importance-of-the-printing-press-for-the-protestant-reformation-part-two.php>.

³⁰ Man, 276.

³¹ Perry Brown, “Preaching from the print shop” *Christian History*, Vol. 11, Issue 2, 33.

his followers were able rapidly to spread their ideas and change the whole nature of religious and theological debate.³²

The printing press not only allowed for there to be robust theological debate in Germany, but it also launched discussions elsewhere. This discussion is a necessary prelude to evangelistic efforts. The result of the Protestant Reformation and its use of the printing press, allowed Christianity to spread to many parts of the known world.

With the invention of the printing press, the Church, now tracking on Protestant lines, reengaged in evangelism. Common people were learning to read and the reading materials produced from Lutheran sources were designed to articulate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in terms that were understandable, practical, and believable. People throughout Europe came to faith and were educated in the faith thanks to the availability of printed materials.³³

This is another example of God using technology to spread the message and cause of Christ. But this development of the Gutenberg Forty-two line Bible and the Protestant Reformation may be the best examples of God providentially using technology in all of human history. The Protestant Reformation represents the perfect coming together of time and technology, method and message, idea and ingenuity that resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel. Without Gutenberg's printing press, the size, scope and significance of the Protestant Reformation would not have been as impactful or revolutionary to the Church. And it all would not have happened without God's providential hand bringing about the right technology at the right time.

³² "From the Printing Revolution to the Reformation," First Impressions modified 2011, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/firstimpressions/From-Manuscript-to-Print/The-Explosion-of-Print/From-the-printing-revolution-to-the-Reformation/>.

³³ Carlton F. Harvey, "Technology and the Church through the Centuries."

Conclusion

There have been many times throughout history where God has providentially used technology to advance the message and the cause of Christ even outside of scripture. During antiquity, one of the major ways God used technology this way was through the development of the Roman Road system. The Roman Road system was a network of paved roads with drainage technology that would allow for free travel throughout all of the Roman Empire. This technology was especially significant because it allowed for people and messages to travel freely, despite the weather, along passable roadways.

Another period in which this marriage of technology and ministry can be seen is during the Middle Ages. Christian fighters used siege weapons during the Crusades to advance the cause of Christ. These siege weapons were technological advancements aimed at giving soldiers an advantage over their enemy. They include: scaling ladders, battering rams, siege towers and various catapults.

Perhaps the most powerful example of God using technology to further the message and cause of Christ can be seen in the development of the European movable type printing press. Though it is true that there have been several attempts and improvements on printing throughout the centuries, Johannes Gutenberg perfected the technique of the movable metal matrix printing press and unveiled it in 1450. This singular technological achievement did more to further the message of Christ than any other technology in history.

Gutenberg's printing press gave rise to two very important achievements as relates to evangelism. First, Gutenberg's press helped to make the Bible accessible to the everyday person. In 1455, Gutenberg began printing the Forty-two-line Bible. This Bible

was so important because it helped wrest control of scriptures from those in the Church and put them into the hands of ordinary people. Secondly, GPP was also important for the effectiveness of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther's skill and savvy at using the printing press proved to be invaluable to his cause. It allowed for robust debate about theology and doctrine to become topics of discussion, not just among the elite, but also among the common.

The printing press came along at just the right time to further both the replication of Scripture and repudiation of immoral practices within the Church. This led to people questioning the practices of the Church and coming into a more personal knowledge of Christ. It is as if God used the time and technology to His advantage in to bring about the changes necessary so that Christianity could continue to survive and thrive.

Without the printing press neither of these things would have happened. Without the printing press, there is no Gutenberg Forty-two line Bible. And without the printing press there is no Protestant Reformation. Without the European movable type printing press, far fewer people would have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

In the previous chapters, the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context has been developed as a valid thesis both biblically and historically. For the project to meet the necessary academic standards the theme must also be examined theologically. In Chapter Four, the theological underpinnings of the thesis is explored.

According to *Introduction to Theology* by Owen C. Thomas and Ellen Wondra, the term theology can take on many different definitions; however, the one favored by many North America theologians is “the methodical investigation and interpretation of content of Christian faith, the orderly clarification and explanation of what the Christian message affirms.”¹ Theology as a field has various components of study including: Christology – the doctrine of Christ, pneumatology – the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and hamartiology - the doctrine of sin. Though these broad categories of doctrine have lasting impact on Christianity, several areas of theology will be explored that relate specifically to the notion being examined for the project. Those areas are practical theology, the theology of evangelism and the theology of technology and the

¹ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 1.

Practical Theology

In James 1:22, we are exhorted to “...be ...doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” This verse describes the intersection of theology and its inherent application which has come to be known as practical theology. This verse suggests James, and perhaps the leaders of the church in the First Century, were concerned about Christianity placing too much emphasis on philosophy and not enough emphasis on acting out the principles Christ taught. Practical theology seeks both to exemplify the teaching of Christ and demonstrate how those teachings are lived out in the Christian community by Christ’s followers.

The genre of practical theology is a relatively new discipline of Christian theology. Practical theology was first recognized as an academic discipline in 1774.² Friedrich Schleiermacher is considered to be the father of practical theology because he was among the first to describe and define practical theology and its unique position among other theological sciences.³ Schleiermacher defined practical theology as “the technik for maintaining and perfecting the church.”

The Westminster Theological Seminary’s Center for Theological Writing defines practical theology as “the application of theological truth to all of life, particularly the life and work of the church. While other theological disciplines are oriented toward understanding God, his work in history, and his revelation in Christ, practical theology concerns our participation with God in the work of bringing that revelation to the church

² Duncan B. Forrester, “Can Theology be Practical?” in Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes van der Ven, *Practical Theology-International Perspectives* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 16.

³ Chang Kyoo Lee, “Practical Theology as a Theological Discipline: Origins, Developments and the Future,” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies*, no.75, 293-315.

and the world.”⁴ These definitions are undergirded by Paul’s explanation of the gifts God gave to the church in Ephesians 4 and the roles those gifts would play in the furtherance of the Church. Both these definitions underscore the fact that the theme of the proposed project included aspects in the field of practical theology.

The project first into the mold of practical theology because it involves the “technik of maintaining and perfecting the church.” One of the main mechanisms for maintaining the church is the promulgation of the Gospel Message. Without the Gospel message being shared to successive generations of spiritual seekers, the church would cease to exist. It is through evangelism that humans participate with God to orient society to God, his work through history and the revelation of his son Jesus Christ.

Some may argue that practical theology, as defined above by Schleiermacher, closely relates to evangelical theology, so much so, that some suggest there could be a blurring of basic practical theology and evangelical theology. In *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, Stanley J. Grenz, suggests the following about evangelical theology:

[T]o be evangelical means to participate in a community characterized by a shared narrative concerning a personal encounter with God told in terms of shared theological categories derived from the Bible. As evangelicals, therefore, we are a people of unique spirituality – a unique vision of what it means to be Christian. Our vision – our evangelical spirituality – in turn both influences our theology and calls for theological reflection.⁵

Grenz’s idea of evangelical theology speaks specifically to a unique spirituality and a shared narrative experience had by those who claim Christ as Savior. This suggest

⁴ “Writing for Practical Theology,” Westminster Theological Seminary Center for Theological Writing, last modified 2014, accessed October 15, 2016, http://www.wts.edu/resources/westminster_center_for_theolog/paper_formatshtml/practical_theology.html

⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 17.

that for Grenz, evangelical theology is mostly individualized. It speaks to how people have a personal encounter with God and how the story of that encounter is transmitted person to person.

Karl Barth argues that evangelical theology is broader still than Grenz's interpretation. In *The Humanity of God*, Barth boils down the definition of evangelical theology to suggest that it is the "science and doctrine of the commerce and communion between God and man, informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ as heard in Holy Scripture."⁶ Here Barth places emphasis on the scripture as one of the main tenets of his understanding of what evangelical theology is. Barth's view of evangelical theology is steeped in the tradition of the Reformation with strong ties to the Word of God as the authority from which Christians live their lives.

Grenz's idea of evangelical theology is individualized. Barth's idea of evangelical theology is scripture based. Both Grenz's and Barth's ideas of evangelical theology reveal points of demarcation as relates to practical theology. First practical theology and evangelical theology part ways in that practical theology can never be individualized as it relates specifically to the church. Second, Barth's idea of evangelical theology cannot overlap with the idea of practical theology because practical theology does not concern itself with the *prima facie* of the Gospels; whereas, practical theology focuses more on how the Church is able to maintain itself in successive generations.

Schleiermacher's view of practical theology was succinct at its inception, but the doctrine of practical theology has developed and evolved throughout the years. One such evolution of the concept of practical theology can be seen in the work of Richard Osmer.

⁶ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 11.

In *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Osmer shares a progressive insight into what practical theology has become and the tasks necessary for works of practical theology to take place. Osmer outlines practical theology in four key steps. Those tasks include: the descriptive-empirical task; the interpretive task; the normative task and the pragmatic task.⁷ For Osmer, practical theology manifests the systems that support ministry.

Osmer's rendering is designed to deduce the steps necessary for practical theology to take place. The steps Osmer prescribes identifies patterns, seeks to understand what the patterns means, constructs an ethical response to the issue, and tries to positively influence the environment.⁸

Dale P. Andrews has a different philosophy of practical theology. Andrews was professor of practical theology at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Andrews speaks much about practical theology from an African-American perspective. For Andrews, this perspective shapes a different kind of practical theology altogether. One that is not overly concerned about the implementation of programs or processes. Andrews' practical theology is steeped in Black theology and aimed at the survival of the African-American community.

In *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Andrews writes:

How to shape faithful religious, moral, social, political and communal practices that in turn shape human thriving, community, and faith traditions. The convergence of racism with other forms of oppression – such as sexism, classism, colonialism, and heterosexism – augments the conditions of the debate for and within black faith. The historical context of African American practical theology

⁷ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008) 4.

⁸ Osmer, 4.

involves black religious and communal practices surviving oppression, while seeking the latter's demise, even as it mutates and evolves.⁹

This view of practical theology is most closely related to the context of the GCMBC. For this project, Andrews' concept describes the historical understanding of ministry that has been performed by the church.

The Theology of the Context

The GCMBC was founded in the same way many African-American churches of the early 1900s were founded. The church was built in the Grooms Road community, in part, because of the school for Black children in the community. Those who went to the school were interested in having a place to worship in the area. Establishing the church close to the school for Black children meant that the church was, and remains to this day, a commuter church. Because of this, then and now, the immediate community surrounding the church does not represent the demographic that fills the church.

This, in a sense, was the founding families staking a claim to band together against the racism and bigotry many in those families had experienced. One of the deacons of the church often tells the story how his family had to come together with other founding families of the church to overcome the fact that his family was not getting paid for the sharecropping work they did in the 1950s. They survived because they were willing to work together.

This anecdote underscores the concept of Black practical theology employed by the church especially since the 1950s. Survival of the founding families has always been

⁹ Dale P. Andrews, "African American Practical Theology," in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan et al. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 11.

essential to how the members of the church have seen and understood the move of God.

The insistence upon survival is underscored in Andrews' *Practical Theology for Black Churches*. Andrews explains how survival is one of the chief elements of practicality for the Black church.

Hampered by the lack of political and economic power, black churches possessed few resources beyond the spiritual and moral dimensions of their religious faith. Since practical theology is particularly concerned with viable means for ministry, any consideration of revolutionary forms of resistance involves larger issues than the ethics of the cause alone. One cannot condemn a people's struggle for survival. Nor can one dismiss their drive for liberation when they have determined survival and communal care as the viable primary means.¹⁰

One of the ways that survival is expressed is through a decidedly Black hermeneutic. The GCMBC strives to empower its members to live as Christians in a society that does not always affirm the rights of its members. A Black hermeneutic takes root in allowing those who attend the church to rise through the understanding of God's Word as preached with an eye toward equipping the congregants for survival in this society.

At the GCMBC, there is an undeniable theology of blackness. There have been many times during my tenure at the church where such sermons have been preached. The sermon preached on the shooting death of Trayvon Martin was undeniably black. The sermons preached on the deaths of Eric Garner and Walter Scott employed a Black hermeneutic. The sermon preached on the shooting death of two black men, one in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and one near Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the subsequent shooting deaths of five Dallas police officers was undeniably black. Those sermons were not

¹⁰ Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 55.

aimed at calling for unrest. Those sermons did not call for retaliation. Those sermons were aimed at helping the African-American congregation navigate the society at large and come to grips with the difficult dichotomy of being black in America and being Christian in America.

Is this Black hermeneutic the same as Black theology? The Black hermeneutic is part of the survival Andrews spoke of and not necessarily the brand of Black theology espoused by James Cone. Cone is considered one of the fathers of Black theology. He defines it as such

Black theology is a theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievements of black humanity. Black theology is a theology of "blackness." It is the affirmation of the black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says, "No" to the encroachment of white oppression.¹¹

Cone's idea of Black theology is rooted in liberation with deliberate overtones of a communal effort to achieve such liberation. Though the members of the GCMBC have worked together to survive in the past, post-Christendom and post-modernity present significant challenges to more recent communal activity. That means the church we will be trying to reach people who have a lessened respect for religion and the church due to post-Christendom while simultaneously, trying to reach people in a generation where devaluing tradition has become the norm due to post-modernity.

The breakdown of the communal effort toward liberation is one place where Andrews disagrees with Cone. Whereas Cone focuses on the collective energy of the

¹¹ James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, Volume I: 1966–1979 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 101.

church to free African-Americans from oppression and racism, Andrews suggests there is a level of individualism inherent in Christianity that prevents communal liberation from taking place. Andrews writes, “Perhaps the greatest oversight of black theology has been in its underestimation of the impact American individualism asserts upon black churches, black religious folk life, and black secular life as well.”¹²

The theology of the GCMBC consists of several theological threads. Those mostly include: a previous Black theology, a Black hermeneutic, and a Black practical theology.

The Theology of Evangelism

Identifying the theological threads within the context will help set the tone for how evangelism can be done by the church. To fully grasp this an examination of the theology of evangelism is necessary. Here, a few definitions of evangelism will inform how one can arrive at a workable doctrine of the subject.

Lewis Drummond, former professor of Evangelism at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, defined evangelism as presenting “Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their Lord in the fellowship of His Church.”¹³ Methodist Evangelist D. T. Niles simplified his understanding of evangelism to “one beggar telling

¹² Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 56.

¹³ Lewis A. Drummond, *The Word of the Cross* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 9.

another where to find bread.”¹⁴ Alvin Reid, author of *Introduction to Evangelism*, defined the word this way:

Evangelism is primary in the plan of God to reach lost people. This is obvious in the practice of the early church. Jesus won Andrew, who told Peter. Jesus won the woman at the well, who told others in the city.... Evangelism is the single most effective way to reach the world for Christ.¹⁵

Reid suggests a system of evangelism that incorporates the components necessary for a basic understanding to undertake the task of evangelism. This perspective would be normative for most as relates to the theology of evangelism.

This, however, is not a doctrine of evangelism held by all. In *Evangelism after Christendom*, Bryan Stone has a different notion.

The evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church – to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ. It is the very shape and character of the church as the Spirit’s “new creation” that is the witness to God’s reign in the world and so both the source and aim of Christian evangelism. On this understanding, the *mission dei* is neither the individual, private, or interior salvation of individuals nor the Christianization of entire cultures and social orders. It is rather the creation of a people who in every culture are both “pulpit and paradigm” of a new humanity.¹⁶

Stone’s view of evangelism challenges the status quo. It calls for understanding evangelism in completely new terms. It is a divorce from the Constantinian viewpoint that marries society and the church as the means through which the level of Christian faith is measured. Stone calls for an elimination of evangelism in the traditional methods, thereby eliminating numerical tallies as successful or sufficient for evangelism.

¹⁴ D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1951), 96.

¹⁵ Reid, 16.

¹⁶ Bryan J. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 15.

Stone's type of evangelism lends itself to a longer arc. It is not an evangelism that can be measured effectively in a short period of time because the act of witness takes longer. This witness is the light on a hill, light of the world and the salt of the earth that makes the Gospel message attractive not through catchy slogans or artful gimmicks but through lived out experiences that confirm the existence of the Holy Spirit of Christ in the believer's life. Stone writes, "Witness is the central and governing logic not only of Christian ethics but also of evangelism. In fact, there is no greater challenge for a church that would evangelize at the beginning of the twenty-first century than to relearn the practice of bearing faithful and embodied witness."¹⁷ In so doing, Stone's view of evangelism becomes practical in its application. Stone's perspective takes a more communal approach to what evangelism must be. Though the liberation element is missing, the communal aspect of Stone's approach is also present in Cone's liberation theology.

Swiss theologian Karl Barth had a slightly different understanding of evangelism. Barth is perhaps best known for his work epic work in systematic theology entitled *Church Dogmatics*. Barth spoke on the theology of evangelism and what could be described as western evangelism as practiced by the Rev. Billy Graham. The following is an excerpt from Kait Dugan's blog ¹⁸ and it describes Karl Barth's impression of the Rev. Billy Graham after hearing him preach in August of 1960:

It was very different when we went to hear him let loose in the St. Jacob stadium that same evening and witnessed his influence on the masses. I was quite horrified. He acted like a madman and what he presented was certainly not the

¹⁷ Bryan Stone, 21.

¹⁸ Kait Dugan is the curator of the Barth collection at the Princeton Theological Seminary. This selection is retold by Eberhard Busch who served as an assistant to Barth and describes Barth and Busch's conversation after the event.

gospel. It was the gospel at gun-point... He preached the law, not a message to make one happy. He wanted to terrify people. Threats – they always make an impression. People would much rather be terrified than pleased. The more one heats up hell for them, the more they come running. But even this success did not justify such preaching. It was illegitimate to make the gospel law or to push it like an article for sale ... we must leave the good God freedom to do his own work.¹⁹

Barth's repudiation of the Rev. Billy Graham's form of evangelistic preaching gives insight into Barth's own theology of evangelism. Barth speaks against the salvation moment as the only part of what evangelism is. He speaks against the idea that you can bring people to a loving God using what could be described as scare tactics. Barth's theology of evangelism is explained in *Church Dogmatics*.

The called are made God's witnesses: not idle spectators merely watching and considering; not for the enjoyment of a spectacle granted to them; not for the vain increase of their knowledge of men, the world and history by this or that which they now come to know of God; not inquisitive reporters; but witnesses who can and must declare what they have seen and heard like witnesses in a law-suit. Their calling embraces not only the fact that God gives them knowledge concerning Himself and the doing of His will, and that He calls them to this knowledge, but also that He summons and equips them to declare what He has given them to know. In other words, their calling means both that He reveals Himself in His action and also that He summons them into the witness-box as those who know. As God speaks His word to these men in and with what He does, and as He is heard by them, HE gives them the freedom, but also claims and commissions them, to confess that they are hearers of His Word within the world and humanity which has not heard it but for which His work is dumb, and in this way to make the world and humanity hear.²⁰

Barth's concept of evangelism is more individualized than Stone's. Stone believes the collaborative witness of the Body of Christ will draw people, whereas Barth's focus is more on an individualized witness. But this individualized witness amounts to a person testifying of God's great revelation in their lives as in a court case. This method is not so

¹⁹ Kait Dugan, "Karl Barth on Billy Graham and Evangelism," Kait Dugan blog, August 15, 2013, accessed October 9, 2016, <https://growrag.wordpress.com/2013/08/15/karl-barth-on-billy-graham-and-evangelism>.

²⁰ Barth, 612.

much Gospel-centric as it is experientially based. Barth's take is different from the classical view of French Reformer John Calvin.

Calvin, being arguably the most important Reformer of his time, developed through his preaching an example of his doctrine of evangelism. Some have suggested that what has come to be known as Calvinism does not lend itself to a traditional view of evangelism or that Calvin's doctrine of predestination negates a necessity for evangelism. But Joel R. Beeke, President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, asserts that a proper reading of Calvinistic theology will reveal a robust and interesting doctrine of evangelism. Beeke summarizes Calvin's philosophy of evangelism through preaching this way.

For Calvin, evangelism involved a continual, authoritative call to the believer to exercise faith and repentance in the crucified and risen Christ. This summons is a whole-life commitment. Evangelism means presenting Christ so that people, by the power of the Spirit, may come to God in Christ. But it also means presenting Christ so that the believer may serve Christ as Lord in the fellowship of his church and in the world. Evangelism demands building up believers in the most holy faith according to the five key tenets of the Reformation: Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, the glory of God alone.²¹

In this Calvin's divine election was still the work of the Spirit; however, the Spirit would cooperate with humanity in order that the Gospel message be preached to create an impact on the hearer that could produce a salvific result. Calvin's prolific preaching schedule was not just to disciple believers in their relationship with Christ. It was also to preach to those who were not saved in the hopes that his co-laboring with the Spirit would produce the desired change.

Calvin never allowed election to limit the free offer of the gospel. He taught that since no one knows who are elect, preachers must operate on the principle that

²¹ Joel R. Beeke, "Calvin on Evangelism," *Mid-American Journal of Theology*, no. 15 (September 2004): 74.

God wills all to be saved. Election undergirds rather than limits evangelism. Election belongs to the special category of God's secret purposes, not to the evangelistic activity of the church. Consequently, the gospel must be preached to every sinner' the sinner's believing response to the free offer of salvation in Christ reveals whether or not he is elect.²²

The Theology of Technology

The providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context demands that a theology of technology be explored. The progression and increasing dependence upon technology has had a definite impact on person to person social interactions. A recent Flashgap study found that 87% of millennials have missed a person to person conversation because they were distracted by their smart phones. Additionally, more than half of those surveyed reported feeling like they had missed out if they did not check their social networks.²³

This speaks to the power and pervasiveness of social media. If it is true that people are becoming less personable in favor of constantly checking social media, this could affect more than just person to person relationships. It could also affect our relationship with God. Herein lies a major postulate of the theology of technology – Where is God in technology? Has technology afforded humans more knowledge than is necessary?

This is very similar to the Genesis 2 account between God and Adam. “And the Lord commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that

²² Joel R. Beeke, 83.

²³ “Social Media making Millennials less social,” CNBC, last modified October 17, 2015, accessed October 19, 2016, <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/10/15/social-media-making-millennials-less-social-study.html>.

thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Genesis 3:5 describes how the serpent twisted God’s first admonition concerning knowledge suggesting those who would eat of the fruit would be like God.

Technology is an ever-increasing form of knowledge. And this rapidly expanding knowledge base is causing some to blur the lines between humanity and divinity. This deconstruction can be seen in the work of philosopher Michael Heim. In Heim’s *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*, he asserts that the furtherance of technology gives humans the chance to play God by saying, “What better way to emulate God’s knowledge than to generate a virtual world constituted by bits of information. Over such a cyber world human beings would enjoy a god-like instant access.”²⁴

Engineer and inventor Ray Kurzweil takes Heim’s concept a step further by suggesting that there will be a definitive point in the future when the barriers between biology and technology will be broken down. Kurzweil describes it as “the Singularity.” According to Kurzweil the singularity will be a time when humans “will transcend these limitations of our biological bodies and brains. We will gain power over our fates. Our morality will be in our hands. We will live as long as we want. We will fully understand human thinking and will vastly extend and expand its reach.”²⁵

In a place where humans are in charge of things that have historically been left to God, what would be the need for God? Is technology developing at such a fast rate that a future can be seen in which the need for evangelism is obsolete because everyone will be

²⁴ Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 93.

²⁵ Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York, NY: Viking, 2005), 19.

their own god. Additionally, if everyone becomes their own god, what is the need for the clergy? Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and other social media platforms are places where Christians can espouse their beliefs. If everyone has their own opportunity to post or tweet whatever their interpretation of scripture or their spiritual musings, what then is the necessity of a preacher? Seminary-trained preachers are being replaced in the public sphere by Facebook prophets with little to no credentials.

What then is the role of the preacher in the future of the church? As technology develops and the lines of grace and providence become increasingly blurred by the ever-expanding capabilities of technology, what will the role of the minister be? Rev. Dr. William Curits, pastor of Mt. Ararat Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, delivered a lecture entitled “The Future of Ministry” as relates to technology in May 2017. In that lecture, Curtis posits the continued relevance of the church and ministers depends on a paradigm shift in how minister’s see themselves. “When everybody’s doing whatever is right in their own sight, then what comes back to your church is the central question – what is right behavior? Our place, purpose and relevance will be around being ethical mentors.”²⁶

In this, Curtis sees the opportunity for evangelism as the Church and her ministers operate as ethical mentors. “People are going to hear the gospel that feeds them around these ethical pillars – what is right behavior? ... it becomes essential because it also becomes an evangelistic link.”²⁷

²⁶ William Curtis, “The Future of Ministry” (lecture, The Potter’s House, Dallas, May 22, 2017).

²⁷ Curtis, “The Future of Ministry.”

This calls for an understanding of practical theology that properly trains the hearers to understand not only their place in God's creation, but also the importance of maintaining reverence for God. In the book, *iGods*, Craig Detweiler summarizes the danger of the society described by Kurzweil. Detweiler says, "artificial intelligence is both an effort to play God and become igods. But it foolishly drives a wedge between brain and body, the self and the spirit."²⁸ Detweiler correctly discerns the fine line that may soon, if not already, be crossed without a proper rendering of God-centric theology of technology.

These words from Wes Avram, assistant professor of Communication at Yale Divinity School, serve to remind us of the inadequacy of technology to perfect the human condition.

There is no divine Other in this cloud, except the otherness of ourselves. It offers no catharsis of our striving, except in the thrill of speed and the distraction of tweets. It offers interest, convenience, and usable information, but little trace of the love for which faith has always turned toward the heavens. This gnostic promise of saving data cannot, finally, redeem a broken soul.²⁹

At its core, a proper theology of technology is not a pointed attempt to replace God. It is an attempt to see God in the usage of and development of technology. Technology cannot repair the foibles in the souls of mankind, only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can do that. If the Gospel is to do that in an increasingly technological age, a theology of technology that promotes a healthy perspective on God and not an insistence on mankind becoming god is essential.

²⁸ Craig Detweiler, *iGods: How technology Shapes our Spiritual and Social Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013), 215.

²⁹ Wes Avram, "Connecting with a Theology of Technology," *Reflections*, (Fall 2011): accessed October 11, 2016, <http://reflections.yale.edu/article/ibelieve-facing-new-media-explosion/connecting-theology-technology>.

Conclusion

The providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context is a topic that crosses several theological threads. Providing a well explored framework for the project was necessary to set a foundation from which the experiment was implemented. For the purpose of this paper the concepts were examined under four topical headings: the doctrine of practical theology, the theology of the context, the theology of evangelism and the theology of technology.

Practical theology as a science was first identified in the late 1700s as the “technik for maintain and perfecting the church.”³⁰ Since that time several ideas of practical theology have emerged that have furthered the understanding of the discipline. One of the leading voices in the field of practical theology is Dale P. Andrews. Andrews has written several books on the subject and approaches practical theology from an African-American perspective which provided valuable insight for the project.

The theology of the GCMBC is one that is undeniably steeped in Black theology aimed at survival. James Cone would describe this as liberation theology; however, Andrews suggests that the increasing individualization of black church members post-1950 has lessened the communal push for liberation with salvation becoming more personal. Understanding this informs how the people within the context think concerning their salvation and sharing that salvation with others and survival within the larger community.

To put forth a theology of evangelism, several prominent theological voices were discussed. Alvin Reid, Bryan Stone, Karl Barth, John Calvin, James Stallings and others

³⁰ Duncan B. Forrester, 16.

helped to shape a robust theology of evangelism that demonstrates the myriad ways evangelism can be done and the different views of what evangelism is at its core. This foundational view of evangelism had an eye-opening effect because it broadened the possibilities of the project beyond traditional methods of sharing the Gospel.

Finally, a theology of technology has been explored. This powerful examination of technology sought to determine where is God in technology. It also sought to debunk the idea that technology needs to develop to a point where mankind will be in charge of his own morality making a god of himself. In the end, technological advances cannot mend a broken soul only Christ through His Gospel is able to do that which makes this project a worthwhile theological undertaking.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The providential use of technology as an evangelism tool has been proven both biblically and historically. The theological implications of the thesis have been studied. Now a theoretical understanding of the thesis must be assessed. One of the many definitions of the word theory is “a hypothesis assumed for the sake of argument of investigation.”¹ In order to investigate the hypothesis that social media can be used as an effective evangelism tool in the rural church context, several theoretical foundational must be examined.

First, a review of best practices using some of the latest books written on the subject of technology usage in ministry will be considered. For this purpose, several models have been identified for closer scrutiny. Those models include those expounded upon in the following books: *Introduction to Evangelism* by Alvin Reid, *Social Media Guide for Ministry* by Nils Smith, *Sharing the Gospel through Social Media* by Erin Ann McBride, *Gods and Gadgets* by Brad J. Kallenberg, *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways* by Meredith Gould and *The Social Church* by Justin Wise.

Second, I will answer a few guiding questions which are designed to bring clarity to the project. These questions include:

¹ Merriam Webster, s.v. “theory,” accessed December 13, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theory>.

1. What resources best facilitate you in determining your approach?
2. What assumptions have you made concerning your topic?
3. Are the resources helping to bring the theme and hypothesis into sharper focus?

Answering these interrogatives will provide reinforcement of learning gained during the literature review.

Additionally, I will expound on a case study of how social media is being effectively used at the Genesis Baptist Church (GBC) in Greensboro, North Carolina. The youth pastor of the church, Rev. Calvin Foster, has implemented social media into several of the church's initiatives. The results of the implementation have been effective at reaching others for the cause of Christ.

Then, consideration will be given to how social media is being used across other fields. In this portion of the writing the fields of media, politics, medicine, law enforcement and academics will be weighed to demonstrate the impact social media has had in those disciplines. Though each field uses social media for different purposes, the wide use of technology shows how effective it has become.

Lastly, a brief description of two of the major theories of technology will be explored. Those theories are inevitability thesis and the theory of the social construction of technology (SCOT). This paper will expose the major difference between these two theories and how SCOT applies to the project of the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context.

Theoretical Foundations in Ministry Practice

Social media may be a still-emerging phenomenon, taking its current form within the past decade, but the merits and usage of the Internet in connection with Christian ministry have been explored for some time. One such place it has been explored was in Alvin Reid's, *Introduction to Evangelism* published in 1998. In the book's appendix, "Using the new Technology," Reid foresees the value of using technology as an evangelism tool and the power of the platform; "What is so wonderful about this technology is that I have won to Christ people who have no Christian background – people so secular they would never let anyone in their house to talk to them or go to church."²

Reid suggests a two-pronged approach to evangelism using the Internet or more specifically, chat rooms, which were a precursor to current social media platforms. First, he suggests avoiding chat rooms that are overtly non-Christian. Those spaces he describes that show "rampant ungodliness" should be avoided to maintain the Christian witness. Second, he states the evangelist should begin with general conversation and allow the conversation to naturally turn to Christ. This requires that the evangelist be prepared to share their testimony online.

Reid's proposed method of using the Internet as an evangelism tool to bring people to church is lacking. Reid's design allows for people to be drawn to Christ and experience salvation; however, it lacks the proper discipleship model. Its focus is on salvation alone, which is good, but not sufficient to draw people to church. There is no method within Reid's model to invite or draw people to church as a subsequent step to

² Reid, 341.

their salvation. It is also lacking in its instruction from the perspective of avoiding certain places. Did not Jesus hang out with the rampantly ungodly in Matthew 2. The Gospel is not just for nice people who need Jesus. According to Romans 5:6 Jesus died for the ungodly.

In *Social Media Guide for Ministry*, Nils Smith differs with Reid in scope and ubiquity of social media. In fact, Smith suggests social media may be the most important technology ever utilized by the Church.

I don't know if there has ever been a greater tool to do this than the Internet, and, specifically, social media. We cannot take this opportunity lightly. While reaching people face-to-face can make a significant impact, that's simply not an option for everyone, and your reach can be very limited. What's important is that we reach out as much as possible, as often as possible, utilizing all means possible."³

The author outlines several steps to developing a sleek social media ministry.

Smith indicates starting with Facebook as the best way to engage using social media.

This is because Facebook is the most ubiquitous of the social media platforms. Beginning with Facebook allows users to take smaller steps toward gaining traction. One of the key components of Smith's technique is for the ministry to spend time listening and becoming acquainted with Facebook and then gradually with other social media platforms.

The major piece lacking from Smith's approach is the evangelistic thrust. Smith's model may work in many contexts, but certainly not as a tool to use evangelism to grow the church. It may be good in disseminating information to the congregation at large, but it fails to deliver on how specifically his model can be used to share Christ.

³ Nils Smith, *Social Media Guide for Ministry* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 7.

A more pointed evangelistic methodology is explored in Erin Ann McBride's *Sharing the Gospel through Social Media*. McBride's idea for sharing the Gospel message is focused around letting specific evangelists do the work of evangelism. Those who are not a part of the evangelistic group, should use their social media platforms to point others to those who are a more significant part of the outreach team.⁴

There is some merit to this approach. It allows for those who may not be as well versed with scripture to do the actual evangelism online or in person. By doing so, this method in some ways professionalizes evangelism. It allows experts to take the role of sharing the Gospel and by doing so puts this work in the hands of those who are more comfortable handling the message.

However, the challenge with this viewpoint is it completely ignores the personal responsibility of all Christians to fulfill the Great Commission. By channeling conversations to a particular person, one may run the risk of the person with whom the Gospel is shared being more of a target or a number. McBride's premise shows itself as she tells readers, "to share the Gospel online, you'll need to approach it like a business activity."⁵ Funneling potential new converts to an expert evangelist feels more like a call escalation in a call center than a Christian sharing the power of Christ in hopes of drawing people to a church.

Brad Kallenger's *God and Gadgets*, shares a completely different perspective for evangelism in a social media world. Kallenger suggests the best way for Christians to share the message of Christ in an increasingly technological age is to share it the old

⁴ Erin Ann McBride, *Sharing the Gospel through Social Media* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, Inc., 2015), 59.

⁵ McBride, 6.

fashion way – face to face. There are many reasons the author places special emphasis on face to face efforts chief among which is the opportunity to be the Christian witness.

“When it comes to evangelism, what matters is not our tools but our form of life. And sometimes the tools that promise to spread the gospel most efficiently end up hindering our witness in ways that go unnoticed.”⁶

In *Gods and Gadgets*, Kallenberg outlines a prohibition about technology that he suggests many in the church world have not be able to properly predict. The author says the dissemination of the Gospel message using technology is dangerous and troublesome.

The problem ... is not that the Gospel will be tainted by the evils swirling around the Internet. Heavens knows there are plenty of those! But the “space” created by the Internet is every bit as sick as the real one we live in. The yuckiness of the dark corners of cyberspace is not what ought to give us pause when considering cyber-evangelism. What believers must come to terms with is that when we employ the latest generation of Web tools, we lose some control over the message.⁷

For Kallenberg, the posting of Gospel-centric messages on social media platforms allows for the poster to lose control over the message altogether. This can lead to the message being misinterpreted, mocked or used for purposes outside its original intent.

The challenge with Kallenberg’s perspective is that it does not account for how God is able to use technology providentially. Throughout the history of the Christian church God has used technology in ways bend the innovation to God’s will. The Appian Way was constructed to transport troops, God used it to transport the Gospel. God can do the same thing with social media.

⁶ Brad Kallenberg, *God and Gadgets: Following Jesus in a Technological World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 71.

⁷ Kallenberg, 78.

Certainly, the Christian church should do its best to be the proper witness to the world; however, the question can be raised is the place of witness diminishing in a post-modern culture? Take the recent presidential election in the United States as an example. According to a Huffington Post article, President-elect Donald Trump made disparaging remarks that offended many people in the following groups prior to the election: Latinos, African-Americans, Jews, Muslims, refugees, and women.⁸ In spite of the offensive nature of the comments, Trump still won the election with the overwhelming support of evangelicals.⁹ Where was the collective Christian witness of the millions of evangelicals during this election to look out for the last, lost, least and the left out who had been offended by then candidate Mr. Trump? The idea of Christian witness is used repeatedly, but in a post-modern and post-Christian age, is that witness as powerful as it once was?

Meredith Gould's *The Social Media Gospel* pushes back against Kallenberg's *Gods and Gadgets*. Gould sees value in the usage of social media to share the Gospel. Gould shares how she has re-imagined Saint Teresa of Avila's well-known prayer, "Christ Has No Body," in technical terms. The following is the result: "Christ has no online presence, but yours, no blog, no Facebook page but yours, yours are the tweets through which love touches this world."¹⁰

Gould supports a multi-faceted path as a social media strategy. Her plan includes: minimizing church jargon, writing specifically with the online reader in mind, being

⁸ Walaa Chahine, "Have you Been Insulted by Donald Trump?," *The Huffington Post Blog*, March 8, 2016, accessed November 6, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/walaa-chahine/have-you-been-insulted-by_b_9405138.html.

⁹ Emma Green, "The Evangelical Reckoning Over Donald Trump," *The Atlantic*, November 10, 2016.

¹⁰ Gould, 9.

intentional and careful when it comes to managing online conflict, guarding against social media burnout, tips for best practices for churches who plan to delve into online ministry and information for developing a social media policy outlining who, what, and when to post. The broader perspective that Gould brings to the topic helps to legitimize social media ministry as ministry.

A final text to examine on the subject of social media is *The Social Church: A Theology of Digital Communication* by Justin Wise. Wise gives a well-rounded assessment of social media and how it can be positively used by the church. The author sees social media as a tool that can be used to overcome some of the deficiencies with outreach in the church. Wise's work supports the stated purpose of the project - the providential use of social media as an evangelism tool in the rural church context. According to Wise, this purpose can be achieved as the church better understands and becomes more social.

The real question is, "How can the church become more social?" How can we become a community-based organization that intentionally seeks to make its cause more accessible? How can we embrace the changes brought on by social media rather than sticking our collective head in the ground, pretending they don't exist? How can we use social to tear down the wall between "us" and "them," whoever "them" might be in our given contexts (e.g., young people, older people, the gay and lesbian community, people of color)?¹¹

Wise's premise on social media takes shape as he explains several points of value expounded upon in the book. Those values include: recognizing that God is an interactive God and thereby not shunning social media, understanding how to navigate a me-first mentality, and being able to rightly differentiate between your life online and offline. The

¹¹ Justin Wise, *The Social Church: A Theology of Digital Communications* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 49.

books detailed above provide a wealth of information and a myriad of ways to incorporate social media into the ministry of your church.

Examining Guiding Questions

What resources best facilitate you in determining your approach....?

Though most of the resources were extremely helpful, two were the most helpful of the group. Those were Justin Wise's *The Social Church* and Meredith Gould's *The Social Media Gospel*. These two resources were most helpful because they explored the nature of the problem that the project seeks to answer – in what ways can social media be used as an evangelistic tool to draw people to the church. The methodologies explained in those texts will help shape the message used in the social media campaign as described in the project proposal.

What assumptions have you made concerning your topic ...?

One of the major assumptions made in the development of this topic was that a more robust online presence on behalf of the context would result in drawing the target demographic. Wise disagrees with that premise. "Starting a Twitter account will not magically bring scores of young people through your church doors. 'Engaging in the

social media conversation' is a waste of time unless you understand why you're doing so."¹²

Information shared in Gould's *The Social Media Gospel* challenges whether the use of Facebook is even relevant to the project. Gould's information suggests Millennial social media users are not as interested in Facebook as they are other platforms.¹³ This information should spur further consideration of whether the time spent posting to Facebook is worth the effort.

Are the resources helping to bring the theme and hypothesis into sharper focus?

The analyzed material definitely brings the theme and hypothesis into sharper focus. Most of these resources are written in a way that provide tangible and practical information for starting a successful social media ministry. This helps to bring the theme into sharper focus because it illumines a path that has already been traveled and shares some potential pitfalls and areas of difficulty to avoid. The previously examined resources help clarify the yet-to-be-done work of the project which helps bring the project into fuller view.

Case Study of Social Media and the Genesis Baptist Church

One of the ways to test the thesis of the providential use of social media as an evangelism tool is to examine how social media is currently being use effectively in a church context. One church that is using social media in ways that yield tangible results is

¹² Wise, 12.

¹³ Gould, 17.

the GBC in Greensboro, NC. The Rev. Calvin Foster runs the church's social media activity. Rev. Foster is a 29-year-old grandson of a former preacher who has served two churches as youth pastor. There are variety of activities that Rev. Foster undertakes to engage young people. One of the most effective is what he calls the "iConference."

The "iConference" idea was birthed in 2016. The idea for the conference came after Foster realized his morning devotionals were reaching 300 people via text. He wondered how many people he could reach using the newly launched Facebook Live platform. After consulting with a few of his friends, Foster decided to attempt hosting a conference targeted at a youth demographic completely online.

The "iConference" was completely executed on Facebook Live. Advertisement was distributed about when the "iConference" would start, who would be speaking and what the topic would be. The response to the first conference in 2016 was overwhelming and it has grown since then. Foster said, "This year the response was we had four states represented – Maryland, Florida, Arkansas and North Carolina and from a budgetary standpoint all of it was free. People were blessed. All the videos were viewed more than 2,000 times. The most viewed video was seen 3,000 times."¹⁴

During the "iConference," Foster encouraged the preachers to offer salvation during the Facebook Live post. At the end of the post, viewers who accepted Christ as Savior were told to click the heart icon on the Facebook Live app. Once the icon was clicked, a follow-up form was forwarded to that person. Foster used the Facebook Live technology to effectively evangelize. Each year since its inception, the "iConference" has resulted in at least five people accepting Christ and several people rededicating their lives

¹⁴ Calvin Foster, interviewed by author, Greensboro, NC, May 16, 2017.

to Christ. The steps that Foster took to execute the “iConference” were not outlined in any of the books reviewed earlier; however, using one of the latest social media features, Foster was able to reach a crucial demographic without expending church resources.

Theoretical Foundations from other Disciplines

Politics

Other disciplines have also recently wrestled with how to use the technology of social media. One of the latest and most glaring examples is the role social media played in the 2016 Presidential election in the United States. The role of social media became a center stage issue because of one candidate’s persistent usage of it – Donald Trump.

In an article written for CNN, political commentator Van Jones describes Trump’s adaptation of the medium this way, “FDR was the first ‘radio’ president. JFK emerged as the first ‘television’ president. Barack Obama broke through as the first ‘Internet’ president. Next up? Prepare to meet Donald Trump, possibly the first ‘social media’ and ‘reality TV’ president.”¹⁵ Jones continues, “every political era is shaped by the media environment of its time. The most successful politicians have an innate understanding of that environment and the skill to act on it. In our era, that could be Trump.”¹⁶ Jones contends one of the things that made Trump successful was his ability to appropriate

¹⁵ Van Jones, “Trump: The social media President?,” *CNN*, Last modified, October 26, 2015, accessed December 7, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/26/opinions/jones-trump-social-media/>.

¹⁶ Van Jones, “Trump: The social media president?”.

Twitter to speak directly to his political base. This fact helped to swell the so-called populist movement that got Donald Trump elected.

But the idea of using social media for political gain did not begin with the 2016 election. In 2015, The Pew Research Center released information surrounding the official White House launch of @POTUS – which became the Twitter handle for the President of the United States. The article entitled, “More Americans are using Social Media to Connect with Politicians,” states “some voters who connect with political figures on social media say they do so to bypass traditional journalism – 26% say that the information they get via a politician’s social networking site is more reliable than what they get from traditional news organizations. These figures are mostly unchanged since 2010.”¹⁷ The power of social media has been building for some time and those candidates who intend to speak to the Millennial generation need to be apt at using the various platforms.

Medicine

But politicians are not the only ones harnessing the power of social media to speak directly to constituencies. The medical profession is using social media as well. Healthcare professionals use a variety of platforms, many of which are not well known by the public at large.

¹⁷ Monica Anderson, “More Americans are using social media to connect with politicians,” *Pew Research Center*, Last modified, May 19, 2015, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/19/more-americans-are-using-social-media-to-connect-with-politicians/>.

Doctors use the platforms to connect directly with patients and to speak peer to peer. This can be seen in the rise of the social networking sites like Doximity and Sermo.

Sermo is a 'physician-only' social networking community that verifies credentials of new members during registration. Physicians representing 68 specialties in all 50 states gather on this site to network, to discuss treatment options, and to query peers for expert advice. As of April 2014, Sermo boasted a U.S. membership of 260,000 physicians, most of whom use pseudonyms for anonymity.¹⁸

The rise of social media is so pervasive within the medical community that it is quickly transforming the way doctors communicate and learn. Social media is gaining ground as a way for experts to do professional development. Universities are capitalizing on social media to help train the doctors of tomorrow. "The high usage rate of social media by 18- to 29- year-olds has motivated the adaptation of clinical curricula to reflect the changing habits and culture of incoming students."¹⁹ Medical professionals have also been able to use social media to have a positive impact on patient care, patient education and the initiation of public health programs.

With the progress, there has also been some cause for concern with the usage of social media. Safeguards have been set in place, especially among the physician-only social media platforms; however, problems still exist with social media's use. Chief among those concerns are accuracy and veracity.

The main limitation of health information found on social media and other online sources is a lack of quality and reliability. Authors of medical information found on social media sites are often unknown or are identified by limited information. In addition, the medical information may be unreferenced, incomplete, or informal. While evidence-based medicine de-emphasizes anecdotal reports, social media tend to emphasize them, relying on individual patient stories for collective medical knowledge. Similar problems exist with traditional online media;

¹⁸ C. Lee Ventola, "Social Media and Health Care Professionals: Benefits, Risks, and Best Practices," *Pharmacy and Therapeutics* 39, no. 7 (July 2014): 491-499.

¹⁹ C. Lee Ventola, "Social Media and Health Care Professionals: Benefits, Risks, and Best Practices"

however, the interactive nature of social media magnifies these issues, since any user can upload content to a site. Social media users may also be vulnerable to both hidden and overt conflicts of interest that they may be incapable of interpreting.²⁰

As the medical field continues to find ways to use social media, it also has to grapple with the best way to use the platform to reassure both doctor and patients that the information shared there will be accurate and simultaneously remain confidential. This is not just a challenge in for healthcare providers, but this is also a challenge in the field of education where social media is also being used.

Education

Social media also impacts the way that Millennials learn which makes it important to review the effect that it has had on the educational system. Incorporating technology in education is unmistakably post-modern. Several post-modern markers can be seen in how technology is currently being integrated in education.

Obviously one of the tenets of post-modernity is the rise in the usage of technology. The Millennial generation has used technology from the time they were born. This has influenced the way they learn. Because of that more educators are finding methods to include technology in lesson planning and execution.

Jeff Nevid, professor of Psychology at St. John's University, wrote an article entitled "Teaching the Millennials." In that article Nevid suggests several tools including making sure information is presented in digestible amounts.

Instructors have but a few precious moments to grab their student's attention... Millennials have been raised in a media-rich environment in which they are

²⁰ C. Lee Ventola, "Social Media and Health Care Professionals: Benefits, Risks, and Best Practices"

accustomed to rapid screen changes... Given the limited attention spans of many students today, we can apply the Rule of 10 by changing what we do during class every 10 minutes.²¹

Nevid suggests traditional lecture methods by themselves may no longer be effective in transmitting information to Millennials. For students who are accustomed to using technology for everything from information gathering to entertainment, incorporating technology in education is a good idea. Technology is shaping education through the post-modern tenet of the collaborative process. Millennials hold to a strong sense of community, whether actual community or virtual community. Allowing Millennials virtual space to concretize theories is happening on college campuses as schools transition to using hybrid models of education which include actual and virtual classrooms.

In an article which appeared in *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, Shelly D. Lane, explains how social media allows for students and professors to discuss concepts introduced in the classroom after class has been dismissed. "Utilizing social media to enhance classroom learning enables the mutual construction of meaning by faculty and students through course-related discussions ... These discussions may also occur in conversations and communication outside of class."²² Allowing for this communal exchange of notions fosters both the Millennial experience and classroom objectives.

²¹ Jeff Nevid, "Teaching the Millennials," *Association for Psychological Science*, (June 2011): accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/teaching-the-millennials#.WFK-DfkrKM8>.

²² Shelly D. Lane et al., "The Digital Divide, Social Media and Education-Related Outcomes," *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education* 3, no. 2 (April 2013): 41, accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.tojned.net/journals/tojned/articles/v03i02/v03i02-05.pdf>.

Law Enforcement

A final place to evaluate the use of social media is in law enforcement. Social media usage among law enforcement is on the rise. Officers use social media to track down suspects and secure investigative leads. This practice is something that has led to officers being able to stop crime with ever-increasing speed.

This information was born out in the LexisNexis survey of officers on “Social Media Use in Law Enforcement.” The information suggests, “law enforcement officers can use real-time social media information to anticipate public gatherings and protests and prepare in advance to maintain the peace.”²³ The survey information goes on to include “stopping an active shooter, mitigating threats toward school students, executing outstanding arrest warrants and actively tracking gang behavior.”²⁴

According to the survey, “eight out of every 10 law enforcement professionals actively use social media as a tool in investigations. 67% of respondents indicate that social media monitoring is a valuable process in anticipating crimes. When used as an investigatory tool, 73% believe social media can help solve cases more quickly.”²⁵

Though these are some positive usages of social media, there have also been some real-world horror stories of how police have used social media. In the wake of the shooting of five Dallas-area police officers in July 2016, Dallas police took to Twitter to not only alert the public to what happened, but also to issue a picture of Mark Hughes. At

²³ “Survey of Law Enforcement Personnel and Their Use of Social Media,” LexisNexis, last modified 2014, accessed December 12, 2016. www.lexisnexis.com/investigations.

²⁴ LexisNexis, “Survey of Law Enforcement Personnel and Their Use of Social Media.”

²⁵ LexisNexis, “Survey of Law Enforcement Personnel and Their Use of Social Media.”

the time, Hughes' picture was accompanied by the caption "This is one of our suspects. Please help us find him!"²⁶

The suspect turned out to be someone who participated in the march that took place before the rally and was not related to the shootings at all. But the usage of social media made that information instantly available even though it was incorrect. As a result, the man whose photo was released by police received several death threats.²⁷ This is an example of how social media can be used with a potentially dangerous result if the immediacy of social media is not properly handled.

Law enforcement officials should develop concrete rules of engagement on how to use the platform correctly. The example demonstrates how the platform can be used ineffectively with potentially dire results. Had protocol been established in the case of mistaken identity in Dallas, it could have prevented Mark Hughes from having to endure the peril that he faced all at the hands of those who are called to serve and protect.

Theory of Technology

Now we turn to examining two of the major theories of technology. Although there are many theories of technology, inevitability thesis and the social construction of technology stand out in relation to the thesis. These two theories are opposing views of the development of technology.

²⁶ Ben Guarino, "Man falsely connected to the shooting by Dallas police is now getting thousands of death threats," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2016, accessed December 9, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/07/08/during-deadly-dallas-shooting-confusion-swirled-around-armed-man-carrying-a-rifle/?utm_term=.a01e1d1eca16.

²⁷ Ben Guarino, "Man falsely connected to the shooting by Dallas police is now getting thousands of death threats," *Washington Post*.

The inevitability thesis states that “once a technology is introduced into a culture what follows is the inevitable development of that technology.”²⁸ In the inevitability thesis, technology is the driver. As technology develops more technologies will become necessary to support the ever-expanding uses of technology. This scenario becomes frightening because under the inevitability thesis technology governs itself without mankind’s logic or guidance.

Daniel Chandler is considered by many to be one of the foremost thinkers on the inevitability thesis. In a lecture on the subject entitled “Technological or Media Determinism,” Chandler gives an example of the mindset that supports the inevitability thesis:

Arnold Pacey suggests that the technological imperative is commonly taken to be the ‘lure of always pushing toward the greatest feat of technical performance or complexity which is currently available.’ The mathematician John von Neumann wrote with some alarm that ‘technological possibilities are irresistible to man.’ Jacques Soustelle declare of the atomic bomb that ‘since it was possible, it was necessary’. And fatalists might add that since we can now destroy the planet, in time we will. The technological imperative is a common assumption amongst commentators on ‘new technologies’. They tell us, for instance, that the ‘information technology revolution’ is inevitably on its way and our task as users is to learn to cope with it.²⁹

Another theory of technology is the social construction of technology theory. SCOT, as it is called, contrasts with the inevitability thesis. Encyclopedia.com summarizes social construction of technology as “a theory about how a variety of social factors and forces shape technological development, technological change, and the meanings associated with technology.” SCOT theory suggests other external factors also sway the

²⁸ Cosmas U. Nwokeafor, Kehbuma Langmia eds. *Media and Technology in Emerging African Democracies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010), 252.

²⁹ Daniel Chandler, “Technological or Media Determinism” (lecture, September 18, 1995).

development of technology – those factors include: what social groups think of the technology and how the technology can be used in different ways by different groups.

Wiebe Bijker explains SCOT further in the book *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs*. There Bijker traces the development of the bicycle using SCOT. Bijker shares the story of a female cyclist in 1898 who rode her bike to an inn for refreshment, but was not served because of her attire which more fitted her comfort as a cyclist than her standing in society. Bijker then raises the question, “Can we say, then, that the design of this technological artifact, the safety bicycle, which allowed our cyclist to travel on her own and choose a more comfortable form of dress, played a role in challenging traditional gender roles and building modern society?”³⁰

The non-linear way that the bicycle was developed demonstrates how, according to SCOT, technology develops with some social influence. “The design of the bicycle first took hold when the relevant social groups coalesced around one design because it solved problems for each group.”³¹ According to SCOT the design of the bicycle was influenced by social norms of the day.

An examination of technological theories is necessary because the project relies heavily on the technological. Inevitability thesis and SCOT provide a framework on what can happen to society as technology advances. In particular, SCOT is important to the development of the project because it provides a theoretical framework. None of the social media sites used in the project were specifically created to spread the gospel or to evangelize. However, Facebook Live, Twitter, Instagram and SnapChat have all

³⁰ Wiebe Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 1-9.

³¹ Bijker, 14.

developed in ways that allow the Christian community to use the platforms. The social influence of the Christian community has had an impact in the way these platforms are being used.

Conclusion

The providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context is a topic that has wide-ranging theoretical application. To implement a project at the Grooms Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Reidsville, North Carolina requires an examination of the intersections of theory and technology. This analysis led to several interesting findings.

In order to determine what wisdom already exists on the subject several books were detailed. Those books include: *Introduction to Evangelism* by Alvin Reid, *Social Media Guide for Ministry* by Nils Smith, *Sharing the Gospel through Social Media* by Erin Ann McBride, *Gods and Gadgets* by Brad J. Kallenberg, *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways* by Meredith Gould and *The Social Church* by Justin Wise.

Once the books were reviewed, several guiding questions were applied to the project. The purpose of applying the guiding questions is to bring the project into a clearer focus to learn from previous models and be able to add new insight to the subject at hand. The guiding questions include: what resources best facilitate you in determining the methodology you have chosen and what has worked and what has not?

Next a case study of the GBC in Greensboro, NC was examined. The youth pastor Calvin Foster shared the many ways his ministry has effectively used social media to

evangelize. One way GBC uses technology to evangelize is through the iConference which has had success in drawing young people to Christ. Perhaps the most-effective is in the iConference which is conducted solely by using Facebook Live.

Several other fields outside of ministry were also identified to see what role social media is playing in these fields. These fields were politics, medicine, education and law enforcement. Each of these fields are dealing with incorporating technology as a base for operation and using social media to reach Millennials. As relates to this project, SCOT theory more aligns with the premise of this thesis.

Finally, two theories of technology were discussed - the inevitability thesis and SCOT. These two theories differ in terms of what influences technology. Though the inevitability thesis suggests technology is best governed by itself, in contrast, SCOT suggests that society best influences how technology is used.

An analysis of these ideas become proof that theoretically the thesis can be done in the context. It can be done because it has been suggested by other authors, examined with guiding questions for the research, proven in different contexts, used across other disciplines including – media, politics, medicine, law enforcement and academics and supported by SCOT.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The foundational chapters of this project provide a framework to establish the research portion of this work. Throughout the previous chapters, the author has highlighted ways that the providential use of technology can be proven biblically, historically, theologically, and theoretically. Now it is important to review the genesis of this venture. How did the researcher decide to explore the topic in the first place? The decision to test the thesis came as a result of the synergy that exists between the researcher and the context in which the research took place. This observation revealed historical challenges with evangelism and a mistrust of technology in both the context and the researcher.

Previous challenges with evangelism is one thing that the researcher and the context share. As a fifteen year-old I had an encounter with an evangelist. The result of this encounter was not to bring me closer to God, instead it turned me further away from God. In retrospect, I realized that my reaction of turning away was not based on the truth of the message presented but, based on the method of the evangelist. This opened my mind to the idea that there is more than one method to effectively evangelize.

In a similar way, the GCMBC has historically had challenges with evangelism. There are two overriding factors that make evangelism challenging. First, the rural nature of the context makes it difficult for traditional means of evangelism to be done. Because

homes in proximity to the church are not in traditional neighborhoods, distance between houses make door-to-door evangelistic outreach difficult. Secondly, the advancing age of parishioners is also a challenge. Many of the parishioners age prevent them from being able to walk the distances necessary to do traditional door-to-door evangelism. My encounter with being unsuccessfully evangelized as a child and the challenges inherent in the context, gave rise to exploring the possibility of doing evangelism in a way that would lessen the impact of those mitigating factors. This led the researcher to examine the use of social media.

A mistrust of technology also provided a place of similarity between the researcher and the context. As a young preacher, I was trained by a pastor who did not graduate from high school. Although I had received my bachelor's degree from North Carolina A&T State University, my desire was to emulate his ministry trajectory. Soon after having coming under his tutelage, I began to understand his distrust of technology. He did not own a computer and could not type and in turn, he encouraged me not use computers, the internet or other techno-savvy sources for sermon preparation or delivery. Before Facebook the popular social media app was MySpace. As a minister, I was told, in no uncertain, terms not to use MySpace for any reason. I was frequently reminded that his methods were the ones he would prefer me to use in my ministry as well.

When I arrived at the GCMBC in 2009, I discovered a mistrust of technology in the context. There was an avoidance of technologies that might aid in ministry in favor of using old fashion methods. It was as if the church was being preserved in the same state it was in 1985. There were very few, ways in which technology was being used to enhance ministry at the church other than being used to amplify. This was due to the effect that the

advancement of technology had on the work force of Reidsville which in turn impacted the context.

When I arrived at the church, I began to make a case to the leaders about using technology to further ministry at the church. There were only two computers in the entire church. Both were set up for word processing but, had long since stopped being used. I checked both computers and learned they both ran on Windows '95 operating system – in 2009. When I mentioned this in a church meeting, one of the members remarked, “my home computer uses Windows '95 too.” There was no church website. There was no social media outreach to potential new members. There was not even the use of computer programs to count, tally or track the finances of the church.

The synergy around technology and evangelism presented an opportunity for growth for both for the researcher and the context. The basis of transformational learning is that both the student and context grow by addressing areas of common deficiency. Using technology to evangelize could help overcome some of the challenges of evangelism to by the rural context. Using technology could also provide an area of growth for the researcher to become more comfortable with some of the current uses of technology. This led to the development of a hypothesis – if people are properly trained to use social media they can learn how to use it to evangelize.

Methodology

Once it was decided to test the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context, a methodology had to be developed to ensure that this was a quantifiable topic. Initially, the researcher was inclined to teach members of

GCMBC rooms Chapel to use social media and then measure how the teaching affected the number of new visitors to the church; however, that idea changed after I consulted with Dr. Justus Hunter, who served as a faculty advisor for this project. Dr. Hunter suggested that there may be too many variables that could influence a spike in weekly attendance and that may be hard to clarify. Thus, a Bible study teaching paradigm was chosen as a model. The Bible study method was chosen for several reasons. One of the reasons this method was chosen was because the context is already familiar with the facilitator as a teacher and with Bible study as a learning opportunity. Another reason this method was chosen is because I was sure it would yield the best response from the membership in terms of those who would attend the class. Specifically choosing several members to go through a specified class would not lend itself to a variety of people being able to evangelize across different demographics. Thirdly, a Bible study model was chosen in order to include biblical principles in the usage of technology and afford the opportunity to highlight the use of technology in the Bible.

It was evident from the subject matter to be covered that the Bible study lessons would need to include support for different learners. Our regular Bible study sessions include information sheets for participants to follow along with as well as write notes on. However, discussing technology without visual aids would have made the task more confusing. One of the main features of this class was adding the technology of PowerPoint to display images, instructions and tutorials.

The Bible study was held each Tuesday beginning with Tuesday, April 25, 2017 and concluding Tuesday, May 30, 2017. Tuesday was chosen as a date so as not to interfere with preaching dates of the researcher. I chose to host the class during the

months of April and May because those months are generally light months in terms of the GCMBC ministry calendar.

There were several topics that I knew the class needed to cover in order to be effective. I decided to program the class around achieving proficiency in the following objectives: a basic understanding of technology; to highlight Biblical instances of technology; to introduce current forms of technology i.e. social media; to teach how social media can be used to evangelize.

After making these decisions for the initial set up of the class, I then needed to choose the methods of information gathering. “Mixed methods involves combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study. Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires.”¹ To test the hypothesis, I decided to use a mixed methods approach for information gathering. The decision to use a mixed methods approach was made to best suit the context. There are many elderly people in my context who would be more prone to answer a questionnaire with simple pre-determined responses than to have the responses open-ended.

Three specific measurements were used to gauge growth during the six-week course. Those measurements were questionnaire, survey and interview. Developing the questions that appeared on these tools was a collaborative process between the researcher, the context associates and the professional associates. The context associates and I met to discuss and brainstorm questions for the measurement tools. I subsequently

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publishing, 2015), 14.

met with some of the professional associates for their input and suggestions on the proposed questions. After those meetings, I settled on the questions for the measurement tools.

The questionnaire was closed-ended tool, that provided the respondents with answers with the following answer range for two of the eight questions: zero, one to three; four to six; seven or more. For the remaining six questions the choices were: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and I don't know.

The questions/statements that appeared on the questionnaire were:

1. In the past six months, how many people have you led to Christ?
2. In the past six months, how many people have you shared Christ with?
3. What way are most comfortable sharing Christ with others?
4. One can lead a person to Christ through social media.
5. Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel message.
6. If Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel message, we should too.
7. Sharing Jesus with others is important for all believers.
8. Christians should not use social media.

The next tool used was a survey. The survey differed from the questionnaire because the survey was open-ended in nature. Respondents were given space to share their own feelings and responses to the questions/statements that appeared on the tool.

The questions/statements that appeared on the survey included:

1. How do you as a member of GCMBC evangelize?
2. What tools do you use when you evangelize?
3. What role does technology play in how you evangelize?

4. How does evangelism impact Grooms Chapel?
5. What can you learn about evangelism?
6. What is social media?
7. What, if any social media apps/platforms do you use?
8. In what ways do you use those social media apps/platforms?
9. What role does social media play in your spiritual life?
10. What would you like to learn from this 3T training session?

The third tool was interview. I chose to do interviews because it allowed participants to answer in their own words without being restricted by time, space, or writing ability like they may have been while answering the questionnaire or survey. A cross-section of the participants in the original class were chosen to participate in the interview portion. This methodology was followed due to the time constraints around interviewing each of the more than forty participants who attended the sessions.

The interview questions were as follows:

1. After the class, what lesson sticks out in your mind?
2. Do you think social media is a viable means to evangelize?
3. What role does relationship play in social media evangelism?
4. After learning about the apps which one are you most likely to use? Why or why not?

The three measurements of questionnaires, surveys and interviews were all done twice. The questionnaires were issued as pre and post measurement tools. The surveys were issued on weeks two and five of the six-week course. The interviews were

conducted after the week three and the week six classes. These tools were each used twice in order to be able to track areas of growth and change during the session.

The three measurements were also used to establish triangulation with the measurement tools. “Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study.”² The goal of triangulation is to help verify the veracity of the information gathered during the research. Probing the participants knowledge using these tools gave the participants opportunity to express their experience of what they learned during the six-week session.

Implementation

As a researcher several decisions were necessary to produce a project that would meet the academic rigors of the doctoral program at UTS. The thesis for the project grew out of the commonalities between my story and the history of the church. The development of four critical markers to measure came out of an attempt to reduce the thesis into four quantifiable sections.

Once I decided on the markers I was going to test, I had decisions to make surrounding the execution of the project. First, I had to determine what name would be used to promote the class. The title of the dissertation was too lengthy to use promote the class in the context. A name had to be chosen that would be short and catchy enough for people to remember and to be intrigued enough to come. I decided on “3T” which was abbreviated from “Teaching Truth with Technology.”

² Lisa A. Guion, David C. Diehl, Debra McDonald, “Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies,” University of Florida, last modified August 2011, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy393>.

The title “Teaching Truth with Technology” indicated to those in attendance what the class would be about. The “teaching” aspect reminded students that the class would give them an opportunity to learn. The “truth” aspect was included to let those involved know that the class would be taught from a biblical perspective. Using the word “technology” let the class know that the subject of technology would be covered.

One of the top priorities for the class to be a success was to announce the project. There were three methods chosen to disseminate news of the project. First, the class was announced each Sunday at the 11am services of the GCMBC. The classes were announced at the context site for the project to encourage the membership to participate.

The classes were also announced each Wednesday at the context during the Bible study hour at 6:30pm. The classes were announced to the context here because sometimes the Bible study attendees are different than the regular Sunday members. The Wednesday night Bible study group tends to draw more dedicated students who want more information that is possible to give during the eleven o’clock worship hour.

A marketing post-card was created to publicize the class. The postcards included the words “3T” and “Teaching Truth with Technology.” The theme and title were included in the postcard to clarify the purpose of the class. The postcards also displayed the four critical questions that were examined during the six-week class.



Figure 7. 3T Postcard advertisement

Those postcards were disseminated using two specific methods. The 3T postcard was displayed on the GCMBC Facebook page. The Facebook page became an initial place to advertise the class to the members who follow the church page. In the weeks leading up to the class, the postcard was re-posted each week as a reminder by posting one of the platforms that would be discussed. This provided additional legitimacy to the class on technology.

The postcard was also posted on the church website. Members are regularly encouraged to check the church website for the latest information. It was a way to encourage membership to attend the class across different platforms. The advertising was effective. The classes were open invitation. Any member of the context was allowed to come. There were two non-members who were interested in coming. One was not able to

attend. The other non-member attended each week, but her information was not included in the final analysis because she was not part of the context. She attended to see if the class would be something that could be beneficial for her church to implement.

Once advertising the class was underway, I determined to develop the curriculum around the class. Developing the class' curriculum meant that I had to be specific in what I wanted to teach and when. Since I knew the class was going to be a six-week course, I decided to address specific topics in each class designed to answer the class objectives. I determined that the best way to plan the program was to tell a story. The story I decided to tell was the synergy between the researcher and the context.

Class One – April 25, 2017

Upon arrival for class one, each participant received a questionnaire. The questionnaire served as an initial to assessment of each person's knowledge base about the subject matter to be covered. In class one, I began by sharing my story. I told the class that I came from a long line of preacher/teachers. My maternal great-grandfather was a preacher. Both my grand-fathers were preacher/pastors. My paternal grandmother was a preacher/pastor. Then I shared, how because preacher was so prevalent in my family and so many people told me I was going to be a preacher, that I ran from preaching as a teenager.

Since I was running from preaching as a teenager, what some would consider a routine encounter became a turning point for me. I shared with the class how a stranger tried to share Christ with me one day while my family and I were in a department store. This encounter was confrontational and scary for me. Instead of it turning me to Christ, it

drove me away from Christ and the things of the church. By telling my part of the story, I shared with the class how evangelism is an important part of practical theology both for me personally and for the church.

Also in class one, I reviewed the history of the GCMBC. I shared with the class, how the church was established as a commuter church. GCMBC being a commuter church means most of its members do not live in the community surrounding the church. This fact means there is a great potential to evangelize in our direct community – if the evangelization is done with tact and care so that it does not result in turning people away from Christ, but in bringing people to Christ.

From there I shared about my ministerial training. I was trained primarily by a pastor who shunned technology. The pastor who licensed and ordained me did not graduate from high school and did not know how to type. He often reminded me not to trust technology and was critical of the popular social media app at the time MySpace. I shared with the class this is one of the ways that I began to foster a mistrust of technology.

Additionally, I took time to highlight the ways that the context had difficulty with technology. I reminded the participants of their mistrust of using computers to handle accounting issues. I reminded them of the challenge of getting an internet provider to support services at the church. I also reminded them that the church had no social media or web-based presence before 2009.

Then I introduced to the class the idea of transformational learning. Transformational learning is the premise that the UTS doctoral program is based on. It is

learning that gives both the student and the context the opportunity to grow. For both the context and I, the areas of growth are technology and evangelism.

I also spent time defining critical terms in the initial class. Defining terms was important because explained the jargon that would be used during the session. For the class, I used James Montgomery Boice's definition of providence. Boice defines providence as "the way God works within creation to manage all things according to the immutable counsel of His own will."³ Using social media to evangelize is providential because it was not the designed intent of those who created the platforms to use them for evangelism; however, God's providence worked within the creation to use the platforms in that way. I also gave examples of scriptures that speak to God's providence. Those scriptures included: Rom. 8:28, Col. 1:16 and Esther.

Next, I defined technology for the class. For the purpose of the class, technology was defined as "the sum of the methods by which a social group provides itself with the material objects of their civilization." This definition allowed the researcher to introduce a broader scope of what technology was in Bible times. No, it was not the computer age, but technology existed because it could be seen as civilization invented new ways to accomplish tasks. For the purpose of the project technology also referred to the use of social media platforms including: Facebook, Facebook Live, Twitter, Instagram and SnapChat. Scriptures were used to support the definition of technology.

In the initial class a third term that needed to be defined was evangelism. Alvin Reid's definition of evangelism was used for the class. Reid defines evangelism as "telling a good message i.e. the Good News that Jesus has conquered sin, death and the

³ Boice, *The Sovereign God*, 229.

grave.”⁴ The scripture used to expand the class’s understanding of evangelism was Matt. 28:19-20.

An additional definition for evangelism was introduced for the term lifestyle evangelism. Lifestyle evangelism was defined as “effective individual evangelism grows out of the context of a healthy, vibrant fellowship.”⁵ This definition comes from Joseph Aldrich’s book of the same name. Lifestyle evangelism was introduced to further demonstrate how evangelism can be done over a social media platform. Since many people live their lives through constantly checking social media, lifestyle evangelism allows for users to display the life of Christ on the social media site.

Following the definition of terms, I gave the class an overview of what the remaining classes would entail including a closer examination of OT and NT scriptures on technology. I also discussed the historical implications of technology being used as an evangelism tool. I introduced theological and theoretical structure for the project. To close out session one, I gave the class a reminder of the dates and times for the remaining classes.

Class Two – May 1, 2017

Upon arrival for class two, each participant received an open-ended survey. The surveys gave participants the opportunity to share in their own words their knowledge of evangelism. The survey was used as a measurement tool to compare with data gathered at the end of the course.

⁴ Reid, 16.

⁵ Aldrich, 11.

After a review of class one material, I began to share my OT biblical foundations work with the class. The examination focused on Jon.1:1-16. The scripture was read and the places where God's providence is found in the text were highlighted. It was God's providence that the ship did not fall apart in spite of the ferocious storm that the sailors endured.

Then I shared how technology had developed in relation to ship building. I used slides to show the difference in construction between the ark and the Phoenician hippo which was most likely the ship that Jonah and the other sailors were on. I allowed students to identify ways that the two vessels were different. Participants noted the use of a sail and oars on the Phoenician hippo.

Next, I explained the evangelistic thrust of the text. The text has an evangelistic thrust because the pagan sailors are introduced to Jonah's God and are willing to sacrifice to Him. This results in the sailors knowing God and His power because Jonah's interaction on the ship. To close out session one, I gave the class a reminder of the dates and times for the remaining classes.

Class Three – May 8, 2017

At the beginning of class three, I reviewed the information from the previous two classes. I also introduced a NT scripture that features the intersection of the three main points of emphasis from the thesis statement – providence, technology and evangelism. The New Testament scripture chosen was Acts 8:26-40. This scripture details Philip's encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch.

Next, I reviewed Boice's definition of providence. The definition of providence allowed me to share instances where God's providence is evidence in the text including verses twenty-six, twenty-seven, and twenty-nine. In the text God so orchestrates the encounter that Philip has the opportunity to share the Gospel with the eunuch which results in the eunuch being saved.

Also in class three, I reviewed the definition of technology in order to show places in the text where technology was being used. I also showed a slide which emphasized the difference in chariots during the OT era and chariots from the NT era. I also displayed an image of a scroll to show how the technology of the scroll became essential to the conversion experience of the eunuch.

There was also a recapitulation of the definition of evangelism. I shared that the chariot in the story is essential for evangelism because conversion at the time of the text was completed when baptism occurred. The chariot serves as a technology that allows for the salvific act to be completed by carrying Philip and the eunuch to a water spot so that the act of salvation could be completed through the act of baptism.

Additionally, in class three, I described the place of the Gutenberg press and how it relates to the thesis. The Gutenberg press represents a place in history where God providentially used technology to spread the Gospel. This was the emphasis of the historical foundations where it was important to show from an extra-biblical perspective how technology had been providentially used for evangelism in history. The Gutenberg press was not the only time providence, technology, and evangelism converged; however, it was among the best examples for the purpose of the project. To close out class three, I reminded the class of the dates and times of additional classes.

During the intermission of class three, I asked for volunteers who would like to be interviewed on the subject of the class and what had been learned to that point. I was deliberate in getting a cross section of all the age-groups represented. After asking the volunteers the above-detailed questions, and recording their answers on videotape, the volunteers were dismissed.

Class Four – May 15, 2017

At the beginning of class four, I reviewed the material from the previous three classes. The purpose of class four was to familiarize the class with the pros and cons of technology. I introduced several technological advancements including computers, guns, and automobiles. This was done in order to highlight the neutrality of technology. How a specific technology is used will determine whether the technology is considered virtue or vice.

At this point in class four, I broke the participants up into groups. It was important that each group had a diverse generational perspective in order to emphasize collaboration as a tool to overcome the mistrust of technology. Each group had at least one person who was under the age of twenty-five, one person between the ages of twenty-six and fifty-five, and one person above the age of fifty-six. The groups were assigned to discuss several questions including:

- What things do you like or dislike about technology?
- What things do you like or dislike about technology use in church?
- How or where can we find common ground?

The group assignment was designed to get inter-generational feedback to promote dialogue across all generations to foster understanding of the issues, challenges, and effective uses for technology. The last question was designed to help the church remember to compromise and work together.

After each group reported on their findings during the group work portion, the focus of the class shifted to a more detailed description of disadvantages of technology. Some of the disadvantages listed were: senior citizens may not be familiar with how to use it, people play on their phones during church service, negative opinions are often shared via social media, and staying knowledgeable on the latest social media platforms. Then some of the advantages of technology were listed included: broadening the church's reach beyond the four walls; making service available online; digital connection to members and guests and introducing God to a new audience.

Also in class four, I shared a case study from the GBC of Greensboro, NC. I interviewed the youth pastor of the church, Calvin Foster, for the case study. Foster shared the many ways his youth ministry has used social media to engage and evangelize others. One of the ways the church used technology is for the "Trailblazers iConference." The conference is a virtual conference hosted online and streamed via Facebook Live. The conference has been hosted since 2016 and had reached thousands of people and resulted in several conversions.

To conclude class four, I recommended some general tips for social media. The tips included: remember the point of social media is to develop community; when you get a comment – respond; share good content. Once I reminded the class of upcoming class dates, class was dismissed.

Class Five – May 22, 2017

At this point in the class, I began to focus attention on the specific social media platforms proposed for the project. Class four started with discussing basic facts about Facebook. Facebook was founded in 2004. Facebook has been described as the “center of the social media universe.” Then logging on to Facebook was described in nine steps. Here the class was divided into groups with each group consisting of at least one person under twenty-five, one person between the ages of twenty-six and fifty-five, and one person over the age of fifty-six. It was important for this portion to be collaborative so that each group could be guided by someone who was already familiar with Facebook.

After the sign-up tutorial was completed, next steps were introduced for the class. The next steps included information about what to do after a participant had established a Facebook page. Next steps portion included instructions on how to add friends to your page. Additional next steps included: spend time reading what your friends are sharing and when you are comfortable – start a conversation.

The class also reviewed several Facebook terms. Terms were defined to familiarize students with the vernacular used on the platform. In order to be effective in using the apps, students needed to know the language of the app.

Making sure that the students were comfortable with Facebook was imperative before we introduced Facebook Live. Facebook Live is a featured offered on the Facebook platform. It allows participants to live stream information on the page where friends can view the content as it happens. Because Facebook Live is a relatively new feature, it was this feature that was focused on to review whether people can be evangelized on Facebook.

General information about Facebook Live was shared with the class. We also discussed the power of Facebook Live by highlighting some of the major events that have taken place on Facebook Live. In 2016 after the shooting of Philando Castile, his girlfriend took to Facebook Live to broadcast the incident.

Next in class five, instructions were given on how to go “live” in ten steps. Once that tutorial was completed, I asked the question, “how do you think this app can be used to evangelize?” The class offered several answers to the question. One student reminded the class about how our church Christmas play was broadcast live using the app. Before the class ended, a survey was given. The survey featured the same questions from the survey given in week two of the class. The purpose of giving the same survey was to measure growth in the students since the time of the first survey. After reminding students of the time and date of the last class, class five was dismissed.

Class Six – May 29, 2017

In class six, I introduced the class to three other popular social media platforms. Here again, the class was divided into groups with each group consisting of at least one person under twenty-five, one person between the ages of twenty-six and fifty-five, and one person over the age of fifty-six. It was important for this portion to be collaborative so that each group could be guided by someone who was already familiar with Instagram.

Instagram was the first platform covered in class six. I took time to share general information about the platform. Instagram was launched in October of 2010. It was designed to capitalize on the growing trend that smart phones were including camera functions on new phones. I also differentiated between Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Next, I showed the class in three steps how to initiate an Instagram account. The process to sign up for Instagram proved to be easy for many of those who participated in the class. Many students found that the process for signing up for Instagram was easy.

Then I took the students through a “Next Steps” slide. This information was a quick guide to share pertinent information about Instagram. Students were reminded to take and post pictures. Then the participants were asked how could such an app be used to evangelize? Some responded to take pictures of worship service or by using pictures or memes to draw people to Christ.

The second platform reviewed was Twitter. General information about Twitter was given to the class. The purpose of Twitter was to share quick short messages with a group of people. The participants were reminded how President Donald Trump often uses Twitter to communicate directly to his base. I then led the class in a tutorial on how to sign-up for Twitter. The tutorial included five steps.

The “Next Steps” slide included information needed to keep in mind for using a text-based app. Those tips included: choosing your words carefully and how to private message someone on Twitter. Students were also taught about the vernacular used on Twitter including: the function of the @ and # symbols.

The final app discussed during the six-week session was SnapChat. My sixteen year-old daughter led the discussion on SnapChat because this is a app she frequently uses. General information about SnapChat was given to the class. I shared the story surrounding the founding of SnapChat and about what makes SnapChat unique is that the content shared on SnapChat is purged after twenty-four hours. I also shared the class that part of the growth in SnapChat is due to the number of individuals who use it between the

ages of eighteen and thirty-four. SnapChat's initial appeal is to be an app focused on having fun.

The "Next Steps" slide included additional information about SnapChat. I shared a brief tutorial on how to edit pictures on SnapChat using filters. Additional SnapChat terms were clarified including: snap, story and streak. The question was asked how can SnapChat be used to evangelize.

The response to this question was varied and interesting. One of the deaconess from the church who is over the age of fifty-five remarked that SnapChat is an app that she would like to use more regularly because it afforded the opportunity to show that people of faith are able to have fun. To her showing Christians having fun was a way to evangelize.

The class ended with a review of relational evangelism. The last slide read "social media is really all about relationships. It's about us developing relations with other people that can point those people to a relationship with God. The best way to evangelize is through relationship, social media gives us an opportunity to do that."

After the class was completed, but before it was dismissed the questionnaires were given. Those questionnaires were the same ones that were given in week one to gauge the student's knowledge of evangelism. Additionally, those who were interviewed at the mid-point of the session were again interviewed about their experience in the class.

Project Proposal Deviation

There were several deviations from the original proposed project and its implementation. The initial project proposal was to follow a qualitative methodology to acquire information from the subjects. However, during the implementation phase the project morphed into a mixed-method approach. This approach used both quantitative and qualitative instruments to acquire data.

The measuring instruments changed for two reasons. The first reason is a change in the what the project intended to measure. In the initial proposal the project aimed at measuring an increase in overall church attendance through using social media to evangelize. In the end, the project changed to focus on measuring whether members of GCMBC could be trained to use social media to evangelize.

Another reason the project took on a mixed-methods approach is because of the number of people who attended the class. With nearly forty people attending each class for the six-week duration, there was enough participants to measure using quantitative methods. Initially, fifteen people was seen as a good number to go through the six-week class; however, that number was regularly exceeded.

Table 1. Participation in 3T Six-Week Course by Class

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6
Participants	46	41	40	39	38	39

As noted by the above chart, even though fifteen people was the target number for the class, each class had more than twice that number of participants. The class averaged slightly above forty regular attendees in each class.

A second major deviation from the project proposal was the surveys and questionnaires were not given using computer tablets. Initially the context associates proposed that the church purchase tablets. Purchasing tablets would allow for participants who did not have smart phones or tablets themselves to learn about the social media platforms using the church's tablets. When the class began the tablets had not been purchased which meant many participants did not have devices to access the social media apps. This hurdle was overcome by partnering participants in groups. Even though a few class members did not have tablets or smart phones they were able to share with someone who brought their personal device.

Another deviation from the project proposal was the use of an investigator as a point of triangulation. Investigator triangulation “involves using several different investigators in the analysis process. Typically, this manifests as an evaluation team consisting of colleagues within a field of study wherein each investigator examines the program with the same qualitative method.”⁶

I proposed investigator triangulation because one of my context associates is a data interpreter for Guilford County Schools. Because he is familiar with data collection and interpretation, I hoped to use him to help correctly analyze data collected from the class. However, his schedule would not allow him to participate in the project to that extent. Although he faithfully attended the six-week class, he did not have time to take on the task of serving as a point of investigator triangulation.

⁶ Lisa A. Guion, David C. Diehl, Debra McDonald, “Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies,” University of Florida.

Summary of Learning

There were several things learned during this six-week 3T class. One of the first things that the class confirmed is the dire need for the context to participate in outreach and evangelism. The need was highlighted by the ages of the participants of the class. The average age of class participants was slightly over fifty years-old. This age broke down into following groups: zero to twenty-four years; twenty-five to forty-nine years; fifty to seventy-four years; and seventy-five years to 100 years.

Table 2. Age range for participants in the 3T class

Age Range	Zero – 24 Years	25 – 49 Years	50 – 74 Years	75 – 100 Years
Class Participants	12	6	26	4

The majority of those who attended the class were between the ages of fifty and seventy-four. This age group outpaced all over groups by more than a two-to-one margin. Only six people attended the class who could be considered in the Millennial age range. This data reveals the challenge facing the GCMBC. The dearth of Millennials in the church is reflected in the number who attended the six-week class. This became one of the main reasons I wanted to test the hypothesis to see if using social media might help attract a different age demographic to the church.

The pre and post survey revealed much information about the participants in the course. Question one of the quantitative questionnaire was designed to measure a participant's activity and engagement in evangelism before the start of the class. Question One was "In the past six months, how many people have you led to Christ?" If someone was already participating in evangelism through individual efforts, their activity, most

likely would not change during the course of the class. If someone was not already practicing evangelism, the class could serve as impetus for more evangelistic engagement from the members of the context.

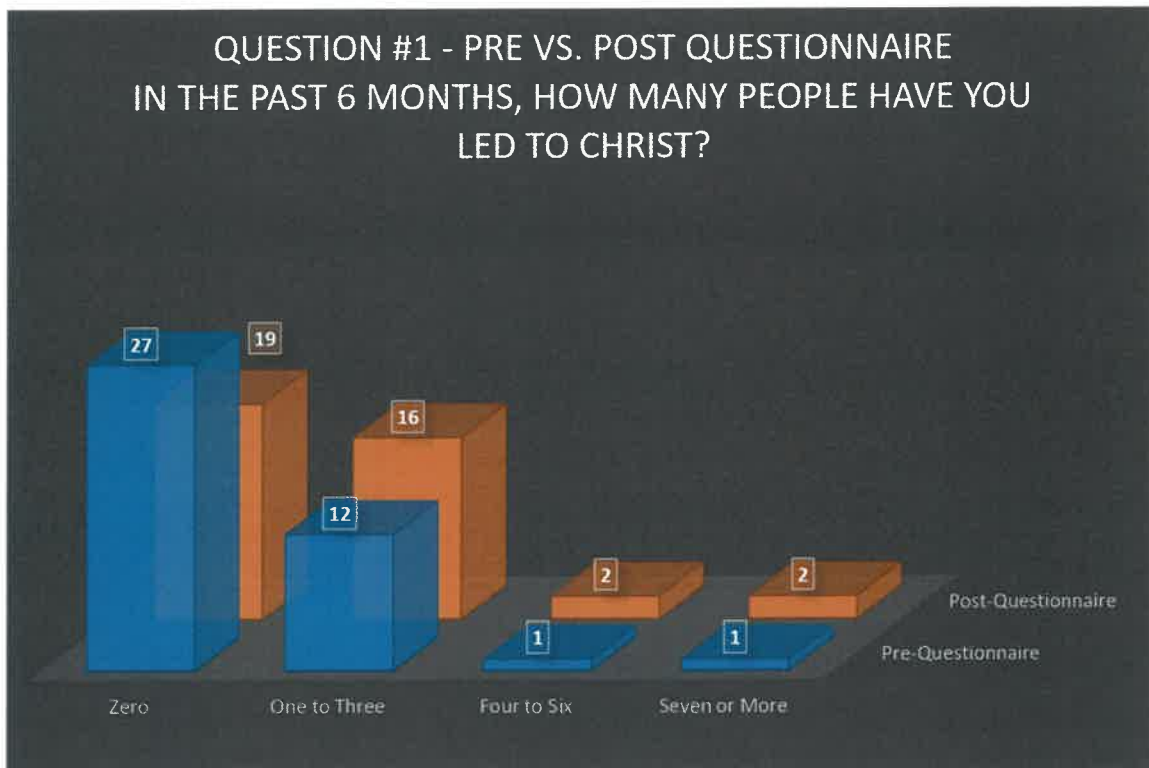


Figure 8. Bar graph showing pre & post questionnaire answers from question 1.

When the class began, twenty-seven people responded that in the past six months they had not led anyone to Christ. At the end of the class the number had dropped to nineteen. The number of those who had led one to three people to Christ increased to sixteen by the end of the class. The number of participants who had led four to six people to Christ increase to two during the class. The number of people who led seven or more people to Christ had increased to two by the end of the class.

In every category, there was a measurable difference between the beginning and the end of the class that suggested more people who took the class got involved in evangelism. Though this instrument did not measure the means used to lead others to

Christ, the evidence suggests that those who attended the class had a greater awareness of evangelism due to the class.

The second question on the pre and post questionnaire was designed to show the difference between a successful evangelistic encounter and sharing Christ. The question attempted to measure the participants understanding of the difference between the two as compared to question one. The question was, “in the past six months, how many people have you shared Christ with?”

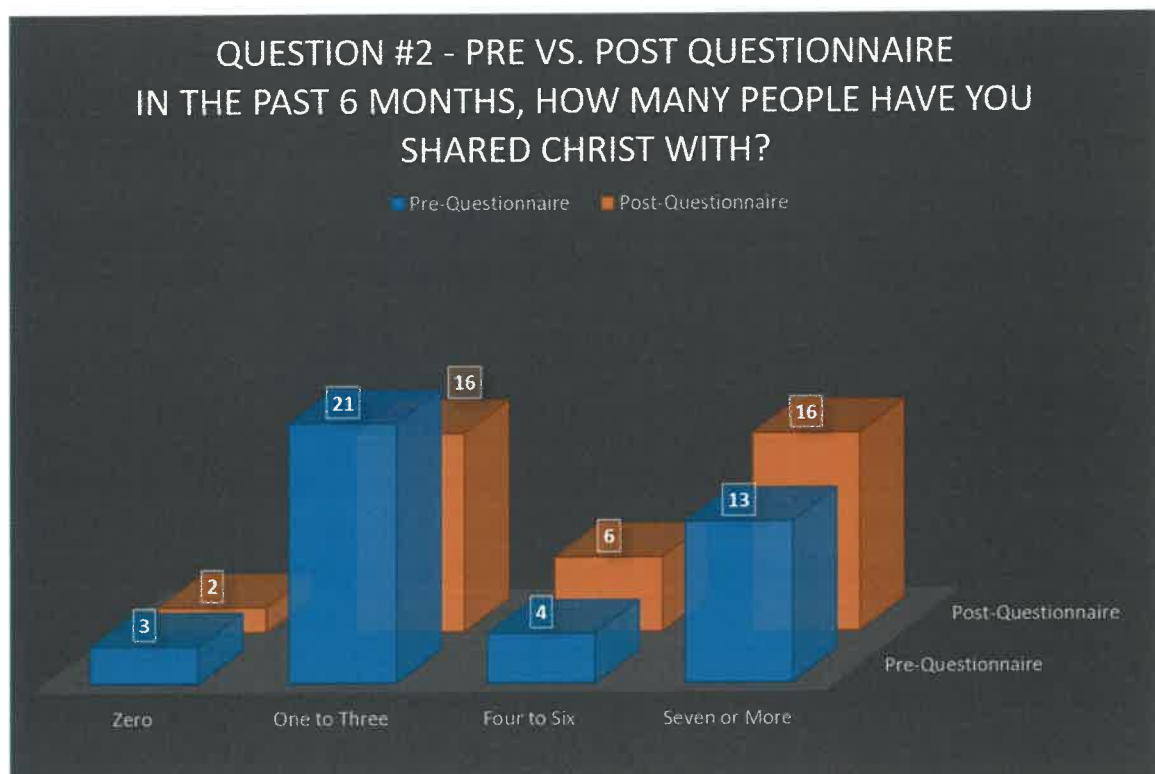


Figure 9. Bar graph showing pre & post answers from questionnaire question 2

What the evidence suggests, when compared with responses from the previous question, is that the people of the context are more prone to sharing Christ with others, but sharing Christ with others does not necessarily result in salvations. After the class, there was an increase in the number of people who shared Christ with four or more

people. In the pre-questionnaire four people shared Christ with four to six people. In the post questionnaire that number increased to six. In the pre-questionnaire, thirteen respondents had shared Christ with seven or more people. In the post-questionnaire, that number increased to sixteen.

Question three was designed to examine what ways participants are most comfortable sharing Christ. Previously, in the context, I shared a Bible study series which highlighted several different methods one could use to share Christ. The methods which appeared on the questionnaire are some of the ways that were discussed during the Bible study. Question three was, “what way are you most comfortable sharing Christ with others?”

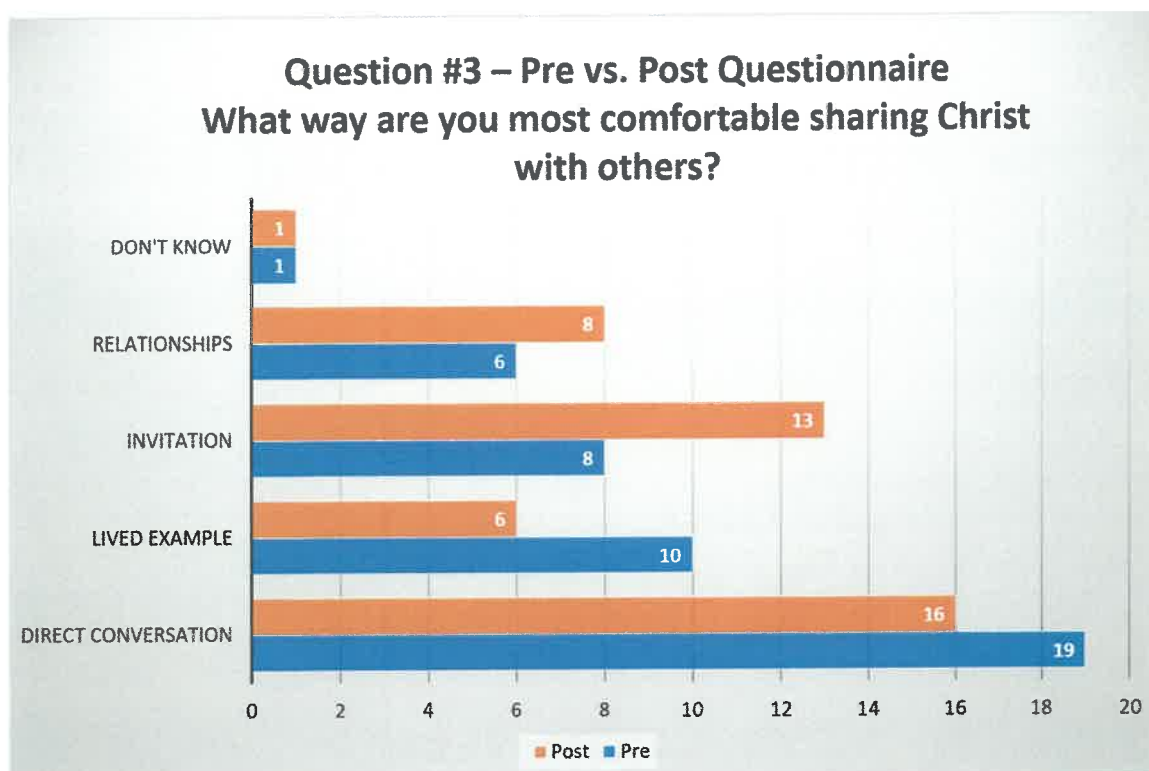


Figure 10. Bar graph showing pre & post questionnaire answers for question 3

Each of the methods highlighted could be used to evangelize via social media. One can evangelize via relationships over social media, by friending or following

someone over one of the platforms. One can evangelize via invitation over social media platforms by inviting someone to view a streaming service or like a particular post. One can evangelize via social media through lived example by posting material that encourages faith. And certainly, one can evangelize by direct conversation using social media. The data indicates a decrease in the number evangelize via direct conversation for the duration of the course.

This decrease in the number of people who focused on evangelizing through direct conversation can be attributed to a growth in the participants understanding of how to evangelize by the end of the six-week class. By the end of the class more people were aware that they could evangelize through relationship.

Question four was designed to directly test a person's knowledge of how social media can be used to lead someone to Christ. Question four was crafted as a statement for participants to respond to. The responses were: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. The statement given was, "one can lead a person to Christ through social media."

QUESTION # 4 – PRE VS. POST ONE CAN LEAD A PERSON TO CHRIST THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA.

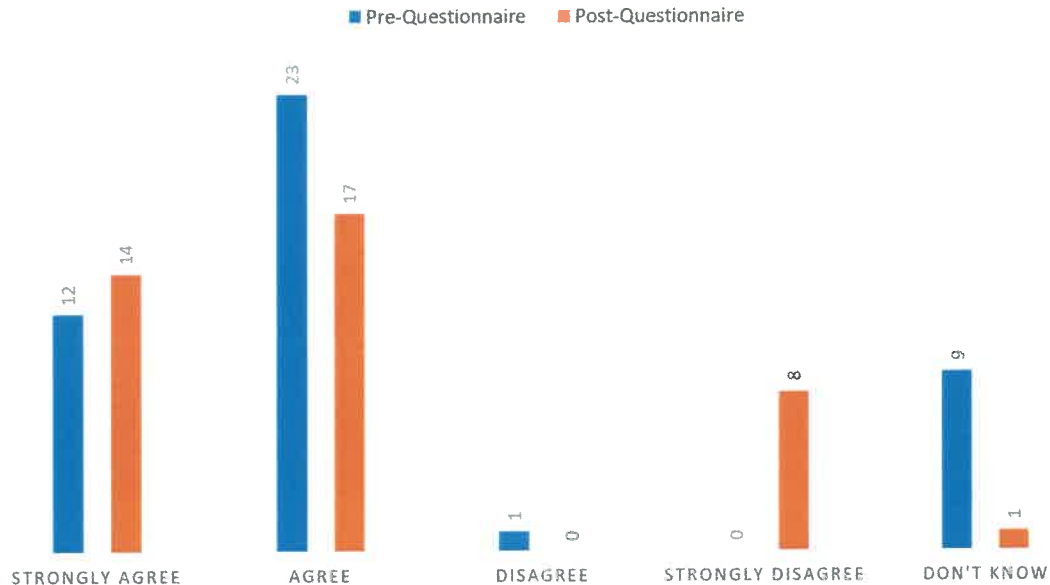


Figure 11. Bar graph showing questionnaire answers from question 4

The information gained through this question demonstrates an interesting shift over the course of the six-week class. Some participants seemed to be less sure of the ability to evangelize using social media at the end of the class. The number of respondents who agreed dipped from twenty-three in the pre-questionnaire to seventeen in the post-questionnaire. Initially nine people responded they did not know if one could use social media to evangelize. That number dropped to one by the end of the course.

Question five stated “Jesus used technology to Spread the Gospel.” This question was designed to help bridge the gap between the idea of what many participants brought to the class as technology and the way technology was defined in the class. Perhaps by showing how or where Jesus used technology could encourage the participants to view technology differently. This would be the first time many in the class were introduced to the idea of Jesus using technology.

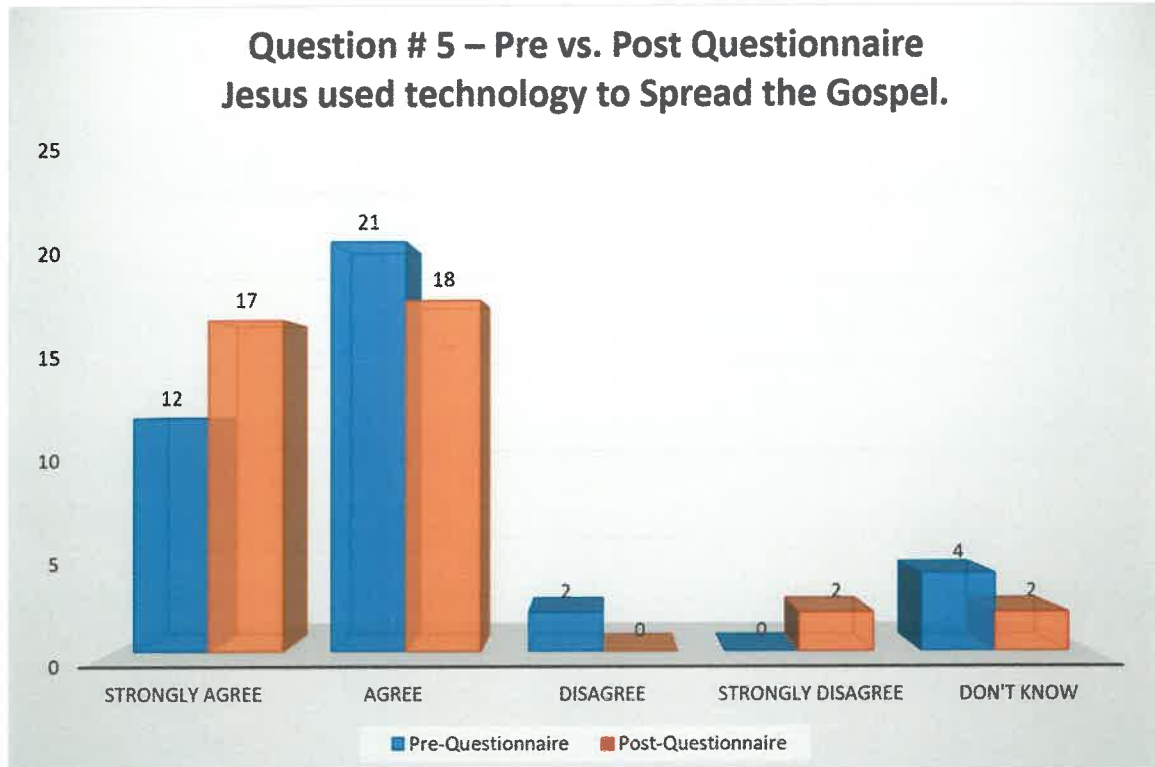


Figure 12. Bar graph showing pre and post questionnaire answers from question 5

The information gathered from question five shows an increase in the acceptance of Jesus' use of technology. In the pre-questionnaire twelve respondents agreed that Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel. In the post-question that number increased to seventeen. There were also fewer people to disagree with the premise once the class concluded. The number of disagrees shrank from two to zero. Interestingly, the number of participants who strongly disagreed with the premise that Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel grew. That number increased from zero in the pre-questionnaire to two in the post-questionnaire.

There was also a slight reduction in the number of participants who agreed with the idea that Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel. However, by the end of the class fewer respondents registered that they did not know. This one question reveals a wealth of information both about the class and about the participants. This question

seems to both suggest growth in understanding about the use of technology in Jesus' day as well as a refusal to accept Jesus' use of technology as defined in the class.

Question six was "if Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel, we should too."

This question was designed to draw the link between doctrine and application. This question was aimed at drawing a link between the life and ministry of Christ. Certainly, those who claim Christ should want to emulate Christ in the execution of ministry.

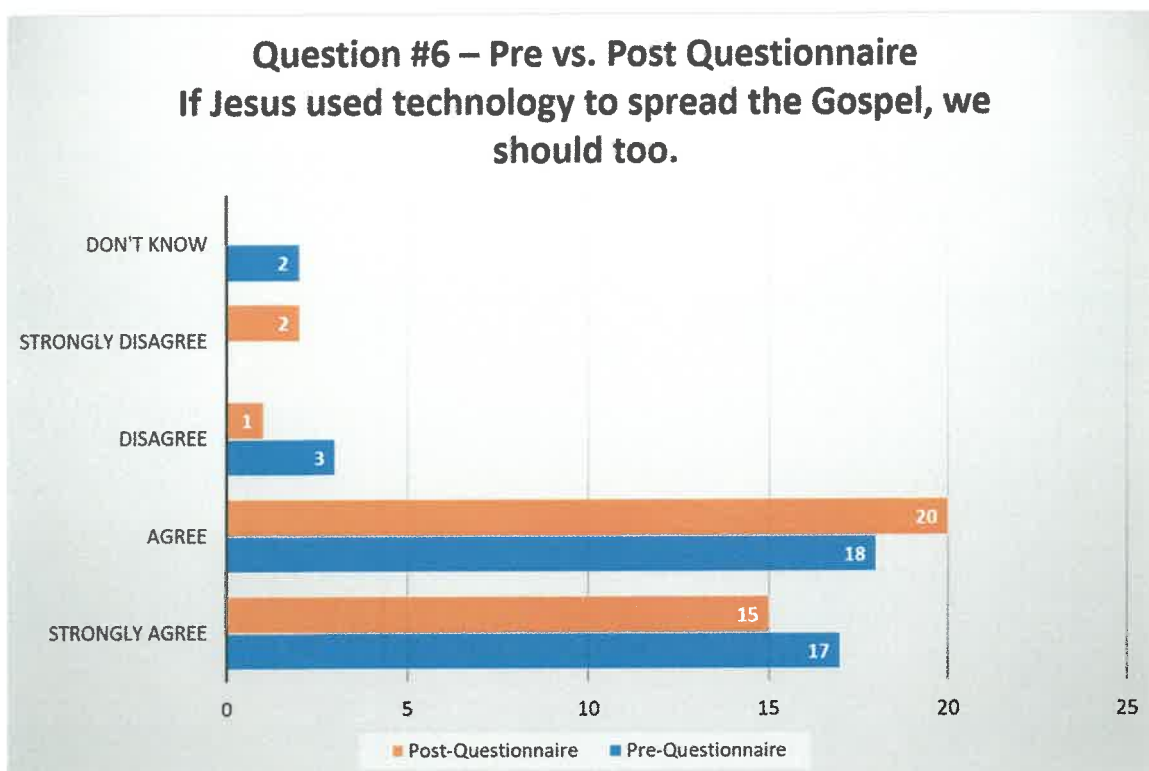


Figure 13. Bar graph showing pre and post questionnaire answers to question 6

The results from question six suggest a disconnect in some who took the class. It would stand to reason that those who follow Christ would do so as well; however, two people answered strongly disagree in the post-questionnaire. Meanwhile, the number of those who responded strongly agree grew from fifteen to seventeen in the post-questionnaire. The number of those who disagreed in the questionnaire dropped from three to one.

Question seven was posed as a statement “sharing Jesus with others is important for all believers.” This question was important to ask to find out how important evangelism was to the class. It was crafted to measure whether participants think evangelism was important at all as a part of their lived out Christian experience.

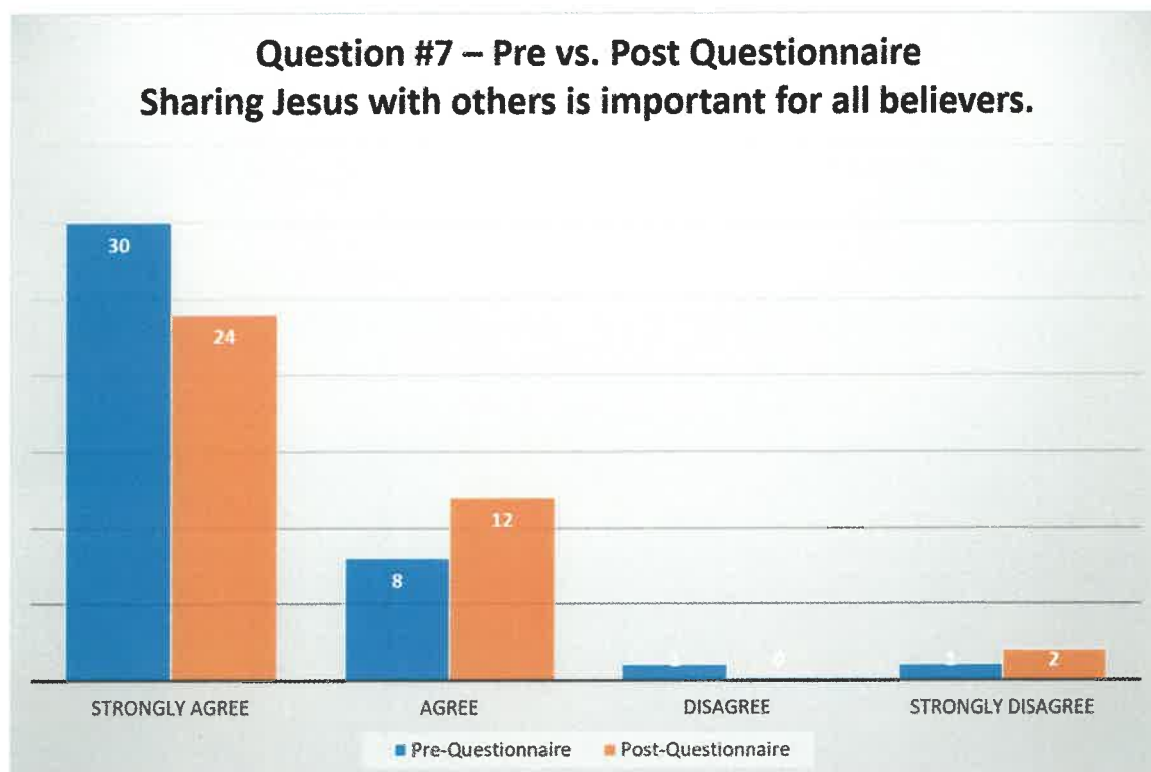


Figure 14. Bar graph showing pre and post questionnaire answers for question 7

The pre-questionnaire shows thirty people thought sharing Christ with others was important to all believers. By the end of the class, that number had dropped to twenty-four. The number of people who agreed that sharing Christ was important increased by four people by the end of the class. The number of people who strongly disagreed with the idea of sharing Christ as important increased by one.

The importance of sharing Christ with others has been a mainstay of my ministry in the context. For several years, I have done several things to ensure that the membership understand and take to heart the command given in Matt. 28:19 and 20. To

see that many still do not believe that Christians have a personal responsibility to share Christ is difficult to explain.

The statement of question eight was “Christians should not use social media.” This statement was key to the development of the project itself. It is a more direct statement than all previous statements in the questionnaire. It identifies the specific type of technology as social media. It also proffers a reason social media should not be used – because it does not line up with the idea of being Christian.

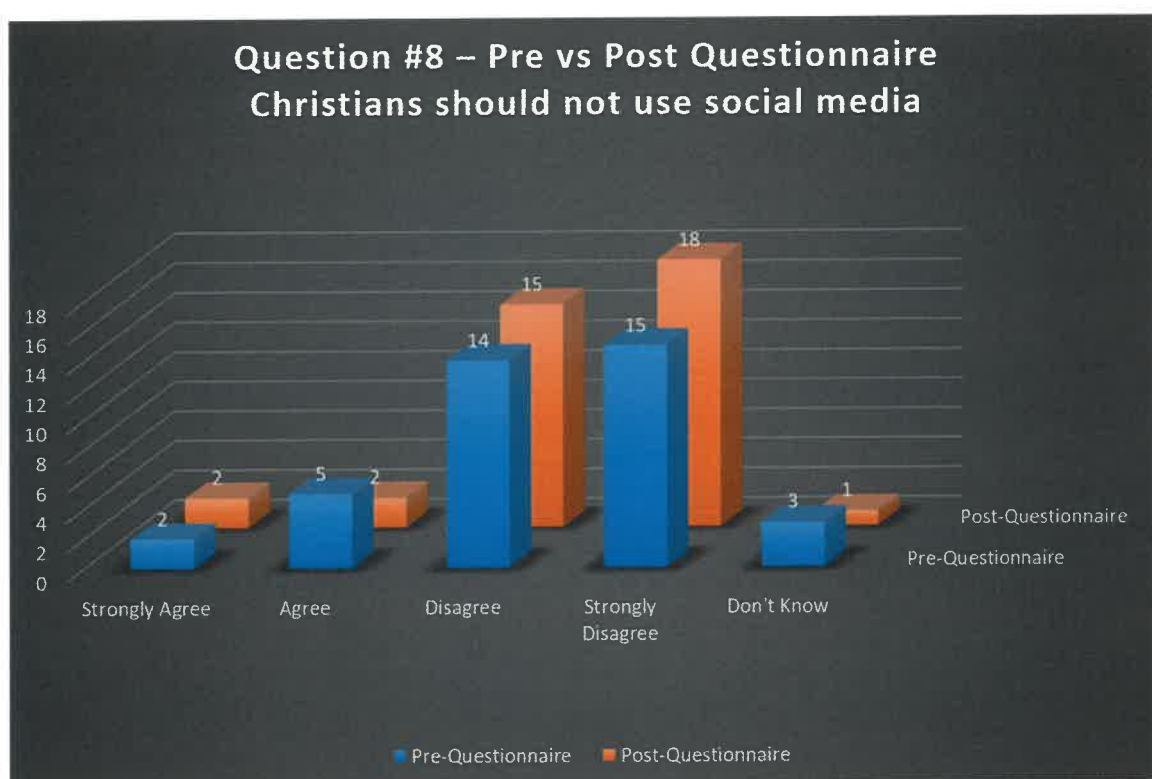


Figure 15. Bar graph showing pre and post questionnaire answers to question 8

The data suggests the number of those who disagreed with the premise of the question and the number of people who strongly disagreed with the premise of the question increased during the course. Those who disagreed went up by one by the end of the course. Those who strongly disagreed increased by three. However, there was no movement among those who strongly agreed with the statement. The number of those

who disagreed with the premise of Christians not using social media decreased during the course. This suggests gains were made during the course with those who believed that social media could be used by those who claim Christ.

During the course student growth was also measured by surveys. Students were given surveys as a way to personally express the how the class had an effect on their knowledge of evangelism and social media. The surveys had ten questions and were given in weeks two and five of the class. The questions on the survey were as follows:

1. How do you as a member of GCMBC evangelize?
2. What tools do you use when you evangelize?
3. What role does technology play in how you evangelize?
4. How does evangelism impact GCMBC?
5. What can you learn about evangelism?
6. What is social media?
7. What, if any, social media apps/platforms do you use?
8. In what ways do you use social media apps/platforms?
9. What role does social media play in your spiritual life?
10. What would you like to learn from this 3T training session?

One person was chosen from three of the four age groups represented to compare the pre-survey answers to post-survey answers. The reason one person was chosen to represent each age group is because due to space restrictions. Respondents were chosen by age groups chosen were from zero to twenty-four; twenty-five to forty-nine and fifty to seventy-four. No one was chosen from the seventy-five to 100 age group is because no one from that age group completely filled out the survey. The below charts show

responses to the survey questions from week two and week five of the session from the three selected participants.

Table 3. 20-year-old's Pre and Post Survey Responses

Question	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
#1	Verbally social media.	Telling friends to come to church or telling them about my church.
#2	Social media/phone.	Social media/face to face contact.
#3	A huge role.	A huge role.
#4	It brings others to the church and they can contribute to helping other with their faith.	It brings potential members who can help our church grow.
#5	How to use social media effectively.	
#6	Platforms that connect you to other people around you.	A technical tool to connect with people without being in physical contact face to face.
#7	SnapChat, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	All most common ones.
#8	Socializing, taking pictures.	Connect with people, keep in contact with friends and family.
#9	A small role.	A moderate role.
#10	How technology can be used effectively to evangelize.	

Table 4. 37-year-old's Pre and Post Survey Responses

Question	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
#1	Through song and service.	Word of mouth. Using phone to post sermon scriptures and message.
#2	Skills and technology.	Phone, computer, mouth.
#3	Allows me to connect to information to evangelize.	Makes things easier to reach others.
#4	Evangelism allows knowledge to be passed and growth to take place.	Bring others to the church. Makes the church more interesting and fun.
#5	Patience and people skills.	You can do it everywhere with almost anything.
#6	Technology or the ability to interact with others in a continuous manner or quick response.	Applications/tools that allows you to connect with the rest of the world without being in a specific area.
#7	Facebook, messenger.	Pintrest, Facebook, Linkedin.

#8	To connect with others.	To connect with others and just spread any message I need to spread.
#9	Very little but is growing in the respect of informing people of the great things happening around me.	Allows me to express my feelings and thoughts freely.
#10	I have no clue but I assume to learn how technology can truly help me in evangelism.	Interesting facts that I don't know. See what research gathering looks like.

Table 5. 61-year-old's Pre and Post Survey Responses

Question	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
#1	Personally using self-stories.	Verbally, through relationship and conversation with other people.
#2	Bible	Relationships, written materials, Bible, written pamphlet "Am I Sure."
#3	None at this time.	I would be more likely to use Facebook from this class.
#4	Helps to grow the church in grace and hospitality.	Snow Sundays, emphasis for sermons with media input.
#5	How to reach the generation that is more apt to use technology.	Nice to know inspirational messages
#6	Means of using technology such as Facebook, SnapChat etc.	Skype, Twitter, Facebook, Facebook Live, SnapChat.
#7	None	Really none, but am open to using Facebook.
#8	N/A	Really do not use.
#9	I use e-mail for following a blog of women's ministry. If e-mail doesn't count as social media then I don't use social media in my spiritual life.	I follow inspirational messages.
#10	How to use Twitter, SnapChat etc. just for ability to be able to use it.	Maybe follow up on Facebook Live session.

An examination of the tables shows some movement of the individuals who took the class in terms of their understanding of evangelism and social media. The participants noted above all appeared to be more knowledgeable about evangelism by the end of the

course. This can be seen through more clarified and specific statements about evangelism in the second surveys. They also demonstrated a better understanding of how the apps discussed in class can be used for evangelism.

The third and final measurement tool used to collect data for the project was interviews. The interviews were conducted with volunteers who participated in the class. These interviews gave participants an opportunity to share without restriction concerning their growth during the course. The information collected provided some of the most candid and helpful data from the course. Those who participated in the interviews did not just share about their experience in the class they also related it to their personal stories.

A seventeen year-old participant interviewed about the class. He spoke about how the class allowed him to learn more about technology. “Before the 3T class, I really hadn’t thought about where technology came from. I really hadn’t thought about how it was used. It wasn’t using electricity, because that’s what I thought technology was – electricity. But you showed us how it goes way beyond that.”

When the seventeen year-old was asked how the technology could help the church better evangelize, he responded,

I have a lot of friends who don’t go to church. It’s not because they don’t want to learn. It’s because sometimes they feel like people in church judge and sometimes they seem like it’s just a money business. And that’s why they don’t come. I feel like going on Facebook Live, they can still come to Christ without having to worry about those situations.

A fifty-nine year-old participant also spoke about his experience in the class.

When asked how has the 3T class helped you, he responded, “It’s helped me to see things from several different angles. It helped me to see there’s more than one way to

evangelize. It's also helped me to take advantage of some of the things that technology has to offer that I did not see before."

A seventy year-old female who took the class talked about the things that can be learned from the class by the Church at-large. She spoke about the impact of the class on church unity, saying,

Technology is going to continue so we have to know that it's going to grow. Even small churches can become large churches by using technology. Because of this class it will help not only to get information out, but it will help the church become a closer unit because we are learning some things together.

Perhaps the most telling of all the interviews came from a seventy year-old member of the church. This member is the same member who remarked, when I assumed the pastorate of the church, that her home computer ran on Windows '95 and she saw no problem with that. She has openly been opposed to many of the initiatives I have tried to start at the church. In spite of her personal feelings toward me, she attended the class each week. She shared how the class has helped her.

Given that I am the most resistant to technology out of everyone in the room, I can say this class has taught me how to listen. I'm not a great listener. I'm more of a talker. But it's opened me up to listening to the possibility to what it can do. I'm more of the little church on the side of the road person who doesn't want to grow any bigger than that. That's where I'm comfortable. Because my world is also small. That's my fear of technology. I don't trust it. I saw what it did to my job. I'm retired. So, I've got a whole lot of resistance to it, but maybe since this class is faith-based, I can come full circle.

The class provided her with an understanding of technology that she did not have prior to participating. She went on to summarize her experience in the class this way.

I've really liked this class. I really have because I wasn't aware of the technology that existed in bygone days. The things you're bringing up are things I didn't expect to hear. I wasn't aware of the technology that existed in Bible days. I never associated the Bible with technology so learning that can show the parallels. Most of us aren't aware of the parallels.

Conclusion

In order to test the hypothesis connected to the idea that technology can be providentially used as an evangelism tool in the rural church context, I established four key markers. Those markers include: to give the participants a basic understanding of technology; to highlight the Biblical uses of technology; to introduce current forms of technology i.e. social media, and to teach how social media can be used to evangelize. Upon completion of the six-week post-modern course, my hypothesis was that participants would know how to use technology i.e. social media to evangelize. In retrospect, I believe three of the four markers were unquestionably met during the six-week course.

The first objective of the class was to give participants a basic understanding of technology. The researcher developed several ways to achieve this goal including: specifically defining technology in class one and spending time in classes three and four talking about technological advancements such as the automobile, guns, and computers.

The second objective was to highlight Biblical uses of technology. This goal was accomplished in several ways. In class one, several examples were taught showing the development technology from the book of Genesis. Additionally, class two was spent discussing the technology of the boat Jonah boarded to flee to Tarshish. Class three was spent explaining the technology of the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot and scroll.

This led to participant's having a greater understanding of technology's role in the Bible as evidenced by their responses when interviewed. One respondent remarked, "I really didn't realize the way that technology was used in the Bible. You have brought out some points where technology was used in the Bible, but in a different way." Another

participant remarked, “I wasn’t aware of the technology that existed in Bible days. I never associated the Bible with technology, so learning that can show the parallels.” A third participant commented how the class helped him see technology in the Bible where he had not seen it before.

Honestly it has reminded me that technology isn’t just electronic based and that the Bible has used technology and it has also progressed and gotten more advanced just like it will in today’s times. Like the chariot and the weapons have advanced. This teaching connects the class to today. It relates the Bible into today’s terms so people won’t feel so distant from it.

The second objective was also measured with the quantitative pre and post questionnaire tool. Questions five and six on the pre and post questionnaire addressed whether Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel. In the class this idea was discussed at length. The discussion centered around the cross as an instrument of torture and death developed by the Romans to punish prisoners. The emblem of the cross, though ancient to modern Christians, would have been considered technology by those during Christ’s day. It then can be argued that the cross of Christ was the melding of technology and theology to spread the Gospel.

Responses to questions five and six showed growth in understanding by the participants. Question five, more people strongly agreed with the idea that Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel. Fewer people disagreed with that premise after the class than before the class started. And fewer people were unsure of whether Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel. For question six, two more participants strongly agreed that we should use technology if Jesus did as well. Also fewer people strongly disagreed with the idea that we shouldn’t use technology, even if Jesus used it. This demonstrates a greater understanding of Biblical technology.

The third objective of the project was to introduce current forms of technology i.e. social media. Classes four, five and six were dedicated to teaching members about social media and how to obtain and use social media apps Facebook, Facebook Live, Instagram, Twitter and SnapChat.

In table 5 when asked what social media apps do you use, the sixty-one year-old respondent wrote “none” in the pre-survey; however, in the post-survey, the same person wrote “I am open to using Facebook.” I have subsequently learned that this person who was not familiar with using Facebook at all, is now administrator of a Facebook page to promote her family farm business. The class gave her the tools and confidence to be able to manipulate the page. She was not the only person who took the lessons of the class to heart. Several of the members of the class who did not have social media accounts created them once the tutorials were covered in the class.

The fourth objective was to teach how social media can be used to evangelize. With each social media platform introduced, the class was asked to brainstorm on the best ways to use that specific app to evangelize. Question four of the questionnaire specifically addressed this subject. The prompt was stated, “one can lead a person to Christ through social media.” The number of students who responded “I don’t know” dropped from nine in the initial questionnaire, to one in the post-questionnaire; the number of those who strongly agreed increased by two and the number of respondents who disagreed decreased to zero. This suggests an increase in understanding of how social media can be used to evangelize. On the pre and post-survey, one responded wrote “social media” as a response to “what tools do you use when you evangelize.” This

suggests during the class this respondent gained the knowledge and skill to be able to begin to use social media evangelistically before the class concluded.

Interviewees seemed to have a better understanding of the fourth objective as well and articulated how social media may be able to help bring a younger audience to GCMBC. One remarked

If we're using social media, we'll definitely reach a younger audience and this church definitely needs a younger audience. It can reach young adults and not necessarily just the teenagers. There are a lot of young adults who use social media and we're lacking in that area and age group too. itself was a technological advancement.

I believe all these evidences unequivocally prove that my hypothesis was correct – the people of the context could and did learn to use technology to evangelize.

A part of my greater concern for the church is will the members do what they now know how to do? It has been nine months since the project, yet the church has not seen a tangible increase in new converts, an upswing in membership or a dramatic increase in visitors to GCMBC. The above information suggests that the largest group of participants were over the age of fifty. This same truth bears itself out almost every time the church gathers. Yet, there has been no great push of evangelism in the church. People know how to use the platforms, but apparently are not using Facebook, Facebook Live, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat or many other methods to engage or invite others to the church.

I undertook the project as a way to make the church more appealing to the segment of the population that the church is missing. Although the hypothesis has proven true for the context, it has not resulted in immediate congregational growth. This fact makes me wonder if love of Christ or even love for the church would inspire members of the context to do something to attract a younger demographic. This could become an area

of additional research for another student – what factors cause a disconnect between understanding how to evangelize and preventing people from participating in evangelism.

Another thing that may require additional investigation is what effect will a shortened attention span have on the future programming of the church. With many people using social media more and more, how will a social media mindset change the way church is done in the future. Will service length be changed? Will churches be more prone to live-stream preachers, singers or choirs from different locations.

A third question that can be investigated is how has social media contributed to a lack of compassion in church. Social media is increasingly becoming a place where people can be shamed and embarrassed in perpetuity through memes, gifs and short videos. Often these social media posts are liked or commented on by people who find the material funny. Could continually laughing at people contribute to the church becoming less compassionate and forgetting that people with problems and issues are supposed to come to church to seek solace and peace in God and not ridicule in church.

A fourth question to investigate is what will the church do to fill the gap as social media breaks down the fabric of society. In a recent Today Show interview, one of the co-founders of Facebook admitted that the apps' founders were aware of the ways that Facebook may cause more isolation and less person to person interaction. In spite of the dangers that many of Facebook's developers knew may happen, they moved forward with the platform. Now many believe that the app is creating a generation of children who are more socially awkward and isolated from people and reality. In light of some of those findings, what ministries or areas can the church help to bridge the gap as society becomes more and more fragmented by the development of social media technology.

Lastly, I will briefly discuss things I would do differently in the course of this dissertation project. I believe my project would have been better had I been able to better craft my questionnaire and survey prompts in a way to point toward my objectives more directly. This would have helped me be able to prove my thesis objectives with data from each point of triangulation. This method would have allowed for a more definitive argument for or against the hypothesis.

I would also extend the class from six-weeks to eight-weeks. I felt as if I could have done a better job teaching about each app with a few more weeks. This would have helped the members of the class become more familiar with the apps. This would have allowed for greater proficiency with the apps and perhaps could have yielded a better result. With more knowledge of how to navigate the apps, participants could have been more comfortable to use the apps to evangelize.

There were several things that went into testing whether technology can be used to evangelize in the rural church context. A six-week course on the subject was planned with the providential use of technology as an evangelism tool in the rural church context as the theme. Pre and post questionnaires were generated to measure participants growth during the course. Surveys were also created to test respondents' experience in the class. Participant interviews were also conducted. Once the data was collected and at the conclusion of the course, the hypothesis was proven – people in the rural church context can learn to use technology as an evangelism tool.

APPENDIX A

3T MEASUREMENT TOOLS: QUESTIONNAIRE AND SURVEY

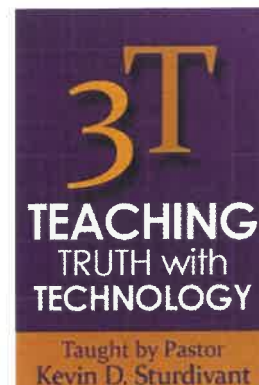
3T Pre/Post Questionnaire

GROOMS CHAPEL

Missionary Baptist Church

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The purpose of this pre-survey is to provide initial information regarding what participants know about evangelism, technology and social media. By participating in this pre-survey, you are assisting the researcher in designing the 3T curriculum. All information gathered in this pre-survey will be measured against post-survey information to ascertain what participants have learned during the 3T course. Below you will be given a number of choices, please circle the answer that best describes your experience. Your honesty is greatly appreciated.



Name _____ Age _____

How long have you been a member of Grooms Chapel?

1. In the past six months, how many people have you led to Christ?
 - A. Zero
 - B. 1 – 3
 - C. 4 – 6
 - D. 7 or more.
 - E. None, I expect the pastor to lead people to Christ.
2. In the past six months, how many people have you shared Christ with?
 - A. Zero
 - B. 1 – 3
 - C. 4 – 6
 - D. 7 or more.
 - E. None, I expect the pastor to share Christ with people.
3. What way are you most comfortable sharing Christ with others?
 - A. Through direct conversation with people.
 - B. Through living as an example for people to see.
 - C. Through inviting people to church.
 - D. Through developing relationships with people.
 - E. I do not know.

4. One can lead a person to Christ through social media?
 - A. Strongly Disagree.
 - B. Disagree.
 - C. Agree.
 - D. Strongly Agree.
 - E. I do not know.
5. Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel message.
 - A. Strongly Disagree.
 - B. Disagree.
 - C. Agree.
 - D. Strongly Agree.
 - E. I do not know.
6. If Jesus used technology to spread the Gospel message, we should too.
 - A. Strongly Disagree.
 - B. Disagree.
 - C. Agree.
 - D. Strongly Agree.
 - E. I do not know.
7. Sharing Jesus with others is important for all believers.
 - A. Strongly Disagree.
 - B. Disagree.
 - C. Agree.
 - D. Strongly Agree.
 - E. I do not know.
8. Christians should not use social media.
 - A. Strongly Disagree.
 - B. Disagree.
 - C. Agree.
 - D. Strongly Agree.
 - E. I do not know.

3T Pre/Post Survey

GROOMS CHAPEL

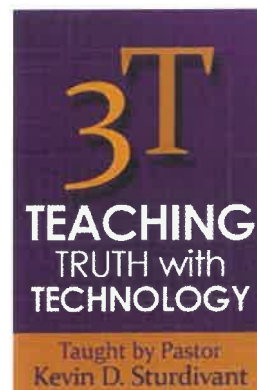
Missionary Baptist Church

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The purpose of this pre-survey is to provide initial information regarding what participants know about evangelism, technology and social media. By participating in this pre-survey, you are assisting the researcher in designing the 3T curriculum. All information gathered in this pre-survey will be measured against post-survey information to ascertain what participants have learned during the 3T course. Your honesty is greatly appreciated. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability, keeping in mind that the more information you provide the better. If a question does not apply to you, you may answer N/A (not applicable).

Name _____

Age _____



How long have you been a member of Grooms Chapel?

1. How do you as a member of Grooms Chapel evangelize?

2. What tools do you use when you evangelize?

3. What role does technology play in how you evangelize?

4. How does evangelism impact Grooms Chapel?

5. What can you learn about evangelism?

6. What is social media?

7. What, if any, social media apps/platforms do you use?

8. In what ways do you use those social media apps/platforms?

9. What role does social media play in your spiritual life?

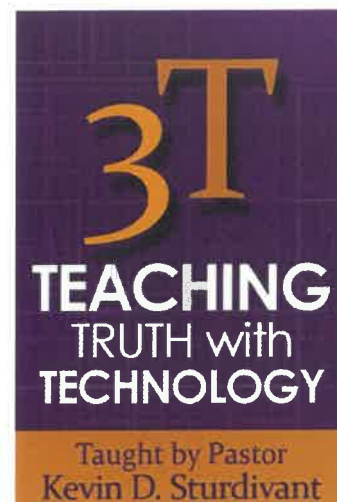
10. What would you like to learn from this 3T training session?

APPENDIX B
3T LESSON HANDOUTS

3T—Lesson One GROOMS CHAPEL Missionary Baptist Church

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NAME: The name of this project is “The Providential Use of Technology as an Evangelism Tool in the Rural Church Context.

GOAL: To train members of the context to use technology, i.e. social media as a tool to share Christ with others.

PURPOSE: To present a well-documented project in fulfillment of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH.

How did we get here?

Pastor’s story.

Grooms Chapel’s story.

What I found is that my story and the church’s story crossed paths on _____ and _____. This process is called a _____.

Providential: The way God “works within creation to manage all things according to the ‘immutable counsel of His own will. Scriptures that speak to God’s providence”

- _____
- _____
- _____

Technology: The sum of the methods by which a group provides itself with the material objects of their civilization. For the purpose of this project, technology will refer to the use of social media platforms including: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and SnapChat. Scriptures that speak to technology:

- _____
- _____

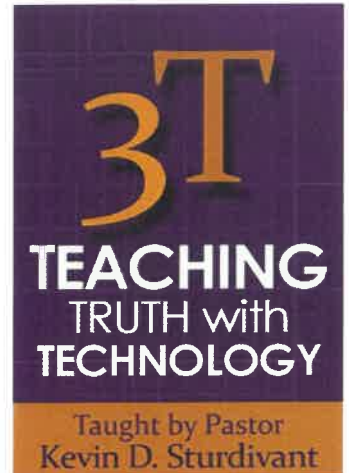
Evangelism: Telling a good message i.e. the Good News that Jesus has conquered sin, death and the grave. Scripture on evangelism: Matthew 28:19-20.

This project will focus on Lifestyle Evangelism. “Effective individual evangelism grows out of the context of a healthy, vibrant fellowship....” Joseph Aldrich

3T—Lesson Two GROOMS CHAPEL Missionary Baptist Church

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Now that the common threads have been identified, the project requires that I find places in the Bible where the idea is demonstrated. This is called _____.

Old Testament Scripture: Jonah 1:1-16

The Providential use of Technology as an Evangelism Tool in the
Rural Church Context

In order for this scripture to be able to fit the criteria of the thesis, it must meet the three main criteria of the project.

1. _____. What ways do we see God's providence in this scripture text? _____

2. Technology. Compare and Contrast.

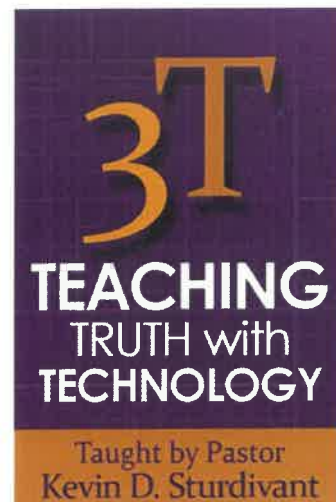


3. Evangelism. What ways do we see evangelism in this scripture text? _____

3T—Lesson Three GROOMS CHAPEL Missionary Baptist Church

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The same “idea” or thesis must be able to be found in the New Testament. New Testament Scripture: Acts 8:26-40.

1. Providential

- A. _____.
- B. _____.
- C. _____.

2. Technology. The first mention of a chariot in the Bible is in Genesis. What differences see between the chariot Joseph used in Egypt and the chariot the Ethiopian eunuch used?

_____.

We also see the use of technology in the scroll.

3. Evangelism. How is the chariot essential to the evangelism in the story? _____.

_____.

Do you think the above information proves that the Bible demonstrates how God can providentially use technology as an evangelism tool, why or why not?

_____.

Another aspect of the project is called _____.

The task of this portion is to find examples of where the thesis has proven itself in history.

Can you name an instance in history where Providence, technology and evangelism have together? _____.

The Gutenberg Printing Press.

• How is it Providential? _____.

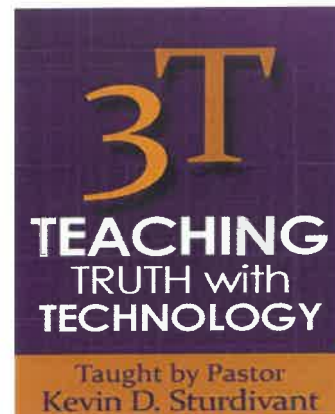
• How is it Technology? _____.

• How is it Evangelism? _____.

3T—Lesson Four GROOMS CHAPEL Missionary Baptist Church

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Tonight we will have a broader discussion on the Pros and Cons of technology.

Define terms:

Pro: _____.

Con: _____.

Group Work

1. What things do you like about technology? _____
2. What things do you dislike about technology? _____
3. What things do you like about technology use in church? _____
4. What things do you dislike about technology use in church? _____
5. How/where can we find common ground? _____

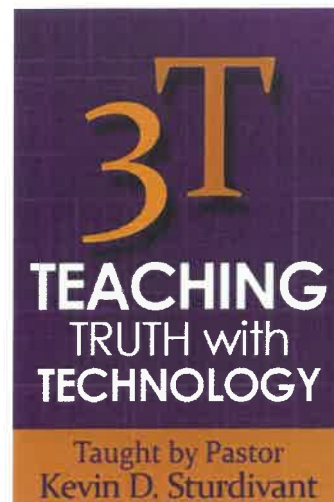
General Social Media Tips.

1. Be yourself. The people that you are reaching out to want to know that you are a real person.
2. _____. The most effective messages are short and straight to the point and use links and images.
3. Remember the point of social media is to _____.
Share your triumphs, prayers requests, post pictures etc.
4. When you get a comment _____. Few things are worse than not responding in an appropriate amount of time.
5. Build a following by starting with your family, friends and church members. While you are building your own community, friend and follow other ministries you like.
6. _____. Do your best to stay as current on social media as possible. The danger of not being current is more than just being ignored.
7. Share _____ content.

3T—Lesson Five GROOMS CHAPEL Missionary Baptist Church

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We have spent the past several weeks talking about technology and learning about places where technology can be seen in the Bible. Tonight we will begin looking at some specific social media apps that can have wide ranging impact on our ability to share Christ with our family, friends and acquaintances.

Facebook

- Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg.
- FB has been described as the “Center of the social media universe.”
- As of October 2014, 1.35 Billion people use FB each month.

Facebook Tutorial. Next Steps

- Add some friends. Just choose about 15 or so.
- _____ . Spend time reading what your friends are sharing.
- _____ .
- Once you feel comfortable—start a conversation.

What are some ways we can use FB to evangelize?

FB terms: _____

Facebook Live tutorial. Facebook Live

- This is a feature inside FB that allows for _____.
- Some inside of FB wanted to launch this feature as early as 2011.
- FB Live was launched in August of 2015, but became available to everyone in Feb. of 2016.

All reaction to FB Live _____.

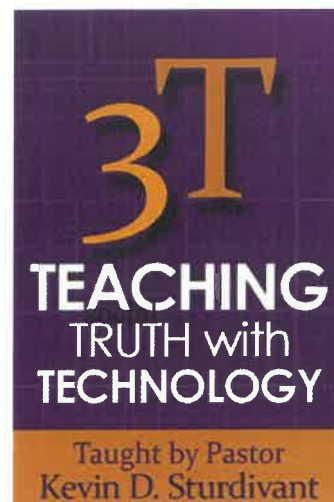
Two high profile incidents have brought FB Live to the limelight in somewhat of a negative way.

How do you think FB Live can be used to evangelize?

3T—Lesson Six GROOMS CHAPEL Missionary Baptist Church

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Tonight we will finish our six-week discussion on technology and evangelism. Our focus tonight will be to survey three additional media apps—Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat.

Instagram

- Launched on October 6, 2010.
- By April 2017, Instagram had 700 million users.
- Instagram's filters allow everyone to take quality photos.

Instagram Tutorial. Next Steps

- Instagram is designed to share pictures. So _____.
- To post a picture, click the _____ icon and follow the instructions.
- The _____ icon lets you know who has liked your pictures.
- How can we use Instagram to evangelize? _____

Twitter

- Twitter was launched in July of 2006.
- Twitter restricts messages to 140 characters.
- President Trump has been called the "Twitter President."

Twitter tutorial. Next Steps

- Twitter is a text format. _____.
- Make sure you include _____ in your tweets. (#)
- DM is a _____ sent from person to person in Twitter.
- How can we use Twitter to evangelize? _____

Snapchat

- Snapchat was initially released in 2011.
- 41% of 18 to 34 year-olds use Snapchat.
- Snapchat's appeal is its fun.

Snapchat tutorial: Next Steps

- Now that you have the account, remember this app is mostly for _____.
- A _____ is a video or image you capture with you device and upload.
- A _____ is a running film reel of snaps you've added in the last 24 hrs.

Summary

Social media is really all about _____.

The best way to evangelize is through relationships, social media gives us an opportunity to do that.

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